

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1898.

A NOBLE LIFE.

By F. M. F. SKENE.



MRS. RANGABÉ.

IN the days when it was still possible for the inhabitants of Sir Walter Scott's "own romantic town" to see him walking along its streets, there were none to whom his presence, wherever he might be met, brought greater delight than to the children of his friend, James Skene of Rubislaw. Very often indeed did they enjoy his unique society, either in their father's house, or in the Princes Street Gardens, their habitual playground, where he often walked. To them all he invariably showed the utmost kindness and affection, but he singled out one of their number for his especial favour.

She was a bright clever little girl, unusually quick-witted and intelligent for her age, who was distinguished as to her outward appearance by a mass of sunny fair hair, which her old nurse carefully arranged in rows of shining curls round her pretty head. For this reason Sir Walter altered her real name of Caroline to Curlinda, and never called her by any other.

It is the story of Curlinda's life we have to tell—begun in a sheltered Scottish home, but passed from early youth to its tragical end as a Greek ambassadress in various foreign countries, and amid such strange vicissitudes and trials as were well calculated to bring out the noble qualities of her strong sympathetic nature.

Sir Walter Scott was not the only one with whom Curlinda was prime favourite as a child. Her perfect fearlessness, her outspoken frankness and high-minded hatred of everything mean or selfish, won for her the hearts of all who knew her well; while her charming disposition, kind and helpful to all, was held in check by a certain pride and strength of will which quickly rejected anything that seemed to her wrong or unseemly.

Her joyous light-heartedness was irresistibly attractive, and her younger sister was quite accustomed to stand aside unnoticed while universal homage was paid to the gifted, winning Curlinda. The little French Princess with whom both associated at Holyrood declared, with her pretty foreign sentiment, that she adored "*la charmante Curlie*," and desired always to retain her companionship; while a distinguished politician, who afterwards held a very high position in India, turned away from all the elder guests in her father's drawing-room to converse with Curlinda.

Governesses and tutors also, who maintained stern rule over their



SIR WALTER SCOTT.

younger pupil, succumbed completely to her fearless independence, which, however, her proud self-respect always kept within reasonable bounds.

A characteristic little trait is remembered of her in early childhood.

She and her sister, with a small cousin visiting them, determined to write their lives, of which the duration in all cases was bounded by a very few years. How completely all were in the age of innocence may be inferred from the manner in which the little cousin began her history: "I was born in Edinburgh," she wrote; "mamma was in London at the time." Curlinda, however, commenced her record as follows—"When people write their lives they generally

begin by saying that they were born of respectable parents. Now I beg to say that my parents are a great deal more than respectable." And then she proceeded to enumerate all the details of her ancestry which she thought tended to shed lustre on her race.

One precious relic of these early days—a letter from Sir Walter Scott on the study of history—was carefully preserved by her to the last hour of her life. It is now the property of her eldest son,



LADY FORBES. SIR WALTER SCOTT'S FIRST LOVE, AUNT OF MRS. RANGABÉ.

who has kindly allowed it to be published for the first time in these pages—

"I have been much pressed for time, lately, my dear young friend, or I would not so long have neglected a letter so interesting as yours. And when I begin to answer your simple and sensible question, I assure you, my dear, I do not (know what to advise); for excepting what is called Littleton's Letters on English History (in reality written by Goldsmith) and which you have read, I know no work on British history of an elementary nature. In ancient history, you have Ferguson and Gibbon for the Roman story, and Milford for that of Greece. But I believe

you are rather looking to the history of Britain, and there I am pretty much at a loss, for a compleat acquaintance with the subject is only to be derived from a perusal of different works, some of which are very ill-written. You have often I daresay tried to wind a puzzled skein of silk—the work goes on very slowly till you get the right end of the thread, and then it seems to disentangle itself voluntarily and as a matter of course. It is just so with reading history. You poke about at first and run your nose against all manner of contradictions till a little light breaks in, and then you begin to see things distinctly. I venture to recommend to you to commence with Lord Hailes' *Annals*, which in some places a dull and heavy work, is lively and entertaining in others, and has the advantage of the most genuine statement of facts. After this I am afraid you have no resource but John Pinkerton to lead you through the Jameses' reigns. It is a work intolerably ill-written; still, however, it cannot be dispensed with. The reigns of James IV and V are told with great spirit and naivety by the ancient Scottish historian, Pitscottie, but the earlier reigns are not authentic in his book. If you tire extremely of Pinkerton, you may read a more agreeable but less correct account of the same period in Drummond of Hawthornden's history of the five Jameses. He writes a good, firm, old-fashioned stile and is not very tedious.

"Having got through the Jameses, you come to the reign of Mary, the most important in Scotland, and, happily, written by an author equally distinguished for taste and philosophy—the late Dr. Robertson.

"When you have once got the general facts of history, whether English, Scotch, or any other country, fixed in your head, you can read memoirs or detached histories of particular areas or incidents with ease and pleasure, but a traveller must first be sure of his general landmarks before he has any disposition to stop for the purpose of admiring particular points of view.

"Adieu, my dear young lady. Do not neglect to cultivate your taste for reading just now, for go the world how it will—and I hope it will go most happily with you—you will always find that with a taste for useful knowledge, you have happiness in store of which scarce any series of events can deprive you. Perhaps I should have used a less strong word, and said comfort and amusement, but, alas, my dear, you will know one day that our utmost allotment of happiness in this world means little more I would have written more about history, but I am interrupted. You must come and tell me how you get on. Give my love to papa and mamma.

"Always your affectionate friend,

"WALTER SCOTT."

"Castle Street,
"2 Decr., 1824."

The happy child-life in Scotland came to an end just when Curlinda was entering on the brightest period of early youth, and she never dwelt in her native land again, for which, however, to the last day of her existence she cherished an enthusiastic affection.

One of her brothers had gone to Greece as a settler, soon after the War of Independence had freed it from the Turkish yoke and raised it into a European Kingdom. There he had married a young Greek lady, Rhalou Rangabé, a descendant of the Emperor Michael Rangabé and the Empress Procopia, well known to history, and his parents and sisters joined him in 1838 and made Greece their home for many years.

Curlinda spoke with enthusiastic delight of going to live under the blue skies of the East, and greatly enjoyed the journey by the Rhine and Tyrol to Trieste, the port of embarkation for the Hellenic shores.

The party travelled with their own carriage in very leisurely fashion, and before crossing the Alps they fell in with an Hungarian Count, who was furnished with splendid horses and a retinue of servants, which showed him to be a man of great wealth and high position. He soon made acquaintance with all the family, and speedily fell violently in love with Curlinda, who was simply greatly amused by his ardent attentions. When they were about to part in Italy he astonished her father very much by formally demanding her hand in marriage.

"But M. Le Comte," said the guileless Scottish gentleman, "I thought that you were married already?"

"That is so, *pour mon malheur*," he answered; "but I am going to Hungary instantly to obtain a divorce from my wife, in order that I may return at once to espouse your charming daughter."

This generous proposal was politely declined, and the acquaintance terminated by the arrival some months later of a case from Hungary filled with many bottles of rare Tokay wine, sent by the disappointed lover. The family remained some time at Trieste, and from thence visited the grotto of Adelsberg in Styria, with its underground lake and endless corridors in the depths of the earth; and later the castle of Lueg, a strange mediæval stronghold built on the very face of a tremendous rock.

No sooner did they enter the vast grotto, the guides bearing torches before them, than Curlinda, enchanted with the weird scene, darted off alone, with her usual fearless daring, to explore the dark intricate passages, absorbed in admiration of the stalactites that hung over them in fantastic shapes. Very soon she was completely lost in the unknown recesses of the strange cavern.

Her father was considerably alarmed, and hurried along the winding paths, of which even the guides knew nothing, in search of her. It seemed an inextricable labyrinth of dark ways, but suddenly, in the dim distance, they heard Curlinda's clear young voice singing an old ballad in joyous tones, rightly judging that the sound would guide those who were seeking her to the spot where she sat composedly on a stone, waiting their arrival. Her prowess in the ruined castle of Lueg, where the caretaker could place only one bed at the disposal of the whole party, was to take the most hopelessly

uncomfortable niche, from which her sisters shrank, and lie down to sleep on a board, close to a sounding waterfall.

When at last the family embarked in the steamer that was to bear them to Athens, they were accompanied by the celebrated Prince Mavrocordato, who had fought heroically in the War of Independence, and this was a source of great gratification to Curlinda in her enthusiasm for her future country.

"What a grand introduction to Hellas it is for us," she exclaimed, watching the old man, who—reticent to most others—was ready to speak kindly to her.

A few days' sail over sunlit seas brought them to the Piræus.

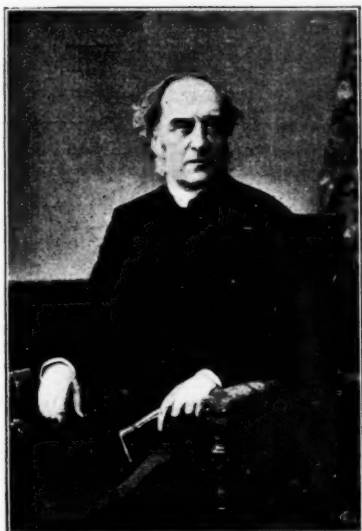
There they were met by the brother of their Greek sister-in-law ready to welcome them and convey them to Athens. Alexander Rangabé, whose distinguished career has lately been detailed in a voluminous Greek biography, became ultimately well known as a European celebrity. In the year of his death, 1893, the late Professor Blackie of Edinburgh read a paper before the Royal Society, on Alexander Rangabé, poet, statesman, and archæologist, in which he did full justice to the genius and learning of the late ambassador. To these qualities might have been added others that were of far greater value: his high sense of honour, his strict conscientiousness, and his transparent rectitude, far removed from the subtle insincerity generally attributed to Greeks.

When Alexander Rangabé first looked on her whom he afterwards designated as his "*ange aux yeux bleus*," he was a very young man with a charming countenance and most attractive manners. Seated opposite to Curlinda in the carriage that was bearing them to Athens, he watched with admiration her fair animated face, as she gazed with delight on the olive groves, and caught her first glimpse of Mount Hymettus; but when at last the Acropolis came in sight, crowned with the white pillars of the Parthenon, and with the low houses of the new city clustered round its base, she exclaimed in French—as M. Rangabé understood no English—"La ville moderne s'agenouille devant l'Acropole!" This expressive homage to the ancient glories of his beloved country, completed her conquest over the young Greek poet.

From that moment till, more than thirty years later, he laid her in her grave with his broken-hearted children round him, she reigned supreme in his affections, and he was served by her with all the fervent constancy of a most devoted wife.

Their mutual attachment was soon fully recognised by both families.

Curlinda's parents had decided to live in Athens for some years, and there was naturally close and constant intercourse with the relations of their Greek daughter-in-law, who belonged to the highest aristocracy of Greece. The elder M. Rangabé was a very distinguished man who had served his country in many important posts; and his wife, sister-in-law of the last reigning Prince of Wallachia, was noted



DR. THOMSON, ARCHBISHOP OF YORK.

place in one family—a brother and sister marrying two persons who stood in a similar relation to each other; it was therefore thought at first that the previous marriage of Alecco's sister to Curlinda's brother presented an insuperable bar to their union. It was decreed by the parents on both sides that the engagement must be broken off, and that the lovers were to meet no more. But in the last interview they had before the rigid separation was enforced, they pledged themselves to an inviolable constancy, which ultimately was to meet with its due reward.

For a time, however, all was mourning and desolation to them both. Curlinda's parents moved to a country house at the foot of Mount Pentelicus, where the young couple would be less likely to meet accidentally, and there Curlinda was wont to wander in

for her remarkable beauty, which has been to a considerable extent inherited by one of her granddaughters not unknown in England as the widow of the Archbishop of York.

Their family consisted of Alexandre—generally called Alecco Rhalou, married to Curlinda's brother, and Euphrosyne, wife of the Swedish Count Rosen. The Rangabés, of course, belonged to the orthodox Greek Church, and were most devoted adherents to its tenets, submitting to all its regulations with unswerving obedience. This fact, for a time, affected very painfully the course of true love in the case of their son and Curlinda. It was against the rule in the Greek Church that a double marriage should take



MRS. THOMSON.

solitary dejection through the adjoining olive grove, refusing all society or amusement; while Alecco would betake himself at night to a cemetery on the borders of the Cephissus, where he lingered despairingly among the tombs, feeling that life was no longer worth living.

His father and mother were passionately attached to him, and his hopeless distress broke down their resistance. It was found, on consultation with an ecclesiastical authority, that if Alecco's young foreign bride would herself become a member of the orthodox Church the difficulty might be overcome.

Curlinda's strong fervent nature would have been ready for any sacrifice, not involving principle, which would enable her to carry out her plighted troth to Alecco Rangabé; but she also knew that it was for many reasons right and desirable that she should belong to the same Communion as her husband. Having carefully examined into the doctrines to which she would be required to give her allegiance, she assured her parents she found nothing in them contrary to the religious teaching they had themselves given her from infancy upwards.

The marriage took place quietly in the presence only of the relations on both sides, and of a lady and gentleman, friends of the betrothed, whose duty it was to hold the golden crowns over their heads as an indispensable adjunct of the sacred rite; these crowns being carefully preserved till the bride and bridegroom pass to the land where there is no marrying or giving in marriage, and then they are laid on the last resting-place in token of the past union.

After this event the name Curlinda was no longer appropriate, and the young wife became Kyria Caroline Rangabé.

For the first few years of her married life she lived in part of the large house occupied by her father and mother-in-law, as her husband was at that time only a Professor in the University of Athens. There her eldest son was born, and received the name of Cleon. At the present date he is the Hellenic ambassador at Berlin. He was attended in his infancy by a Greek woman who deserves a brief record, for she was a type of the very best class of peasants from the mountain villages of Attica.

Xanthi was a widow, having been married at an age when little English girls are in the nursery, and she was in all respects absolutely upright and honest. She was also intensely devout, adopting all the most ascetic rules of her church with unflinching self-denial. She had the fervent passionate nature of her Eastern race, and she lavished all her stores of affection on her nursling with a tenacity of devotion which never relaxed. She was naturally taciturn, but she could be heard privately addressing him with all the poetical terms of endearment peculiar to Greece—"Light of my eyes" "Soul of my soul—Heart of my heart."

When the time came that her young charge had outgrown her



ALEXANDER RANGABÉ, GREEK AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN, WASHINGTON, CONSTANTINOPLE, AND PARIS.

almost broke her heart. service in chapel was over, and there prostrated herself before the sacred Icon representing the Divine One to whom she looked for help.

The whole of that long night she remained in prayer, offering up ever the same petition, that she might see her child once more. When morning dawned she was so stiff from the protracted vigil that she had great difficulty in rising from the floor. But scarcely had she done so when she heard one of the nuns calling to her from below: "Mother! Mother Xanthi, come down quickly! your child is here!"

And it was true. The young man had gone to Tenos for

ministrations and was sent to school, she left the house, which had grown desolate for her, and became a nun in the island convent of Tenos; there, exactly like Anna in the Gospels, serving God night and day in prayer and fasting; her child, as she termed Cleon Rangabé, having always a foremost place in her supplications.

One day she received a letter from his mother telling her that he was going away for his education to Germany and France, which seemed to her the end of the world. The idea that she might never see him again

She went up to her cell when the evening



CLEON RANGABÉ, GREEK AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN.
ELDEST SON OF MRS. RANGABÉ.

reasons quite unconnected with his old nurse, but being on the island he had ridden up to the nunnery to see his well-remembered Xanthi.

The nuns in this convent devoted themselves to the care of the insane, whom they, in common with the majority of the Greeks, believed to be simply possessed by evil spirits like the persons mentioned in the Gospels. So strong is this belief that, instead of saying to anyone who acts in an eccentric manner, "Are you mad?" the Greeks invariably say, "Are you demonized?" Xanthi had many curious ideas as to the familiar presence in this lower world of the denizens of the unseen realms. One night when she was paying a visit to the Rangabés, a room was prepared for her in which it happened that there was a small statue of Apollo. Being asked next day how she had slept, she exclaimed: "Sleep! how could I possibly sleep when that thrice accursed heathen was walking about the room all night?"

Caroline Rangabé remained with her husband in Athens for several years, while he held various offices under Government, and finally that of Minister of foreign affairs. Then his wisdom and great abilities as well as his uncompromising rectitude having been fully recognised, his mission was changed to that of Hellenic ambassador in several foreign countries; he held that post successively in Berlin, Washington, Constantinople, Paris, and finally Berlin again till the close of his diplomatic career.

When his wife first accompanied him to the German Court, his father and mother had both passed away; her own relations had returned to England, and she had six sons, over whom she watched with an untiring and self-sacrificing devotion that ended only with her life. It was in her ceaseless efforts to give them a perfect education and training, and to promote their welfare in every way, that the noble qualities of her nature shone forth the most conspicuously; for her existence, with these paramount objects in view, was one perpetual heart-breaking struggle, to which unusual calamities added a bitterness of anguish that ultimately broke her down completely.

That she should have succeeded, under the most difficult circumstances, in giving to her six clever boys a first-rate education and high culture, as well as a most admirable training in all that was to enable them to become honourable and distinguished men, seemed almost miraculous; for nothing but her own indomitable energy and perseverance could have overcome the obstacles that stood in her way. She had to meet them single-handed, for her husband's whole time was engrossed with his own onerous duties, and, in his unbounded confidence in her wisdom and ability, he left the whole care of the family to her sole responsibility. She was as assiduous in her tendance of her little daughters as of her sons, and spared no pains to give them all the accomplishments and culture which has well fitted them for the position they occupy at the present day, as the wives of men highly placed in Greece and Russia; but to launch so many young men in careers suited to their tastes and dispositions might

have seemed, with the adverse elements against them, an almost impossible task for anyone but their high-spirited, devoted mother.

There were a thousand hindrances to every step she took in political jealousies and animosities, but the chronic difficulty was an almost total want of money, which weighed upon her more or less to the end of her days. Greece was in financial difficulties during nearly the whole of Caroline Rangabé's married life, and while it was absolutely necessary that the services of indispensable functionaries in



PRINCESS BIBICA ROSETTI, DAUGHTER
OF MRS. RANGABÉ ; IN GREEK DRESS
FOR RUSSIAN COURT BALL.



HELENA DE PETROFF, DAUGHTER OF
MRS. RANGABÉ ; IN RUSSIAN DRESS
FOR COURT BALL.

Athens should be paid, it was much easier to leave the salaries of ambassadors in abeyance, as they were too patriotic and high-minded to remonstrate. The same impoverished state of the country affected Alecco Rangabé's private property; such land as he possessed in Greece brought him no return, while even the rent of his large house, let to some Government officials, was not forthcoming.

Thus, while Caroline Rangabé had to go to Court receptions where she was styled "her Excellency," considered to be a "grande dame," and expected to appear as richly attired as the other ladies of the

Corps Diplomatique, she was straining every nerve at home to meet the ordinary expenses of her family. She was obliged to deprive herself of everything that might have given even the smallest amount of ease to her own life in order to pay for the instruction of her children in school and college, and to provide the extra masters which their own ambition to distinguish themselves imperatively demanded. Without entering into further details, it is enough to say that her married life was one long unrelenting course of sternest self-sacrifice and wearing anxiety of mind.

While her children were all still joyous and light-hearted round her, she had some compensation in seeing them grow up pure and good and true, according to her deepest heart's desire ; but, from the time of the Franco-Prussian War, there fell upon her a series of crushing blows which ended only with her life, and which were borne from first to last with heroic courage and patience.

Two of her sons had elected to enter on a military career. They were devoted to their native country, and bent on being properly prepared to serve efficiently as officers in the Greek army. Their choice of a profession, which might prove one of danger, was a cruel pain to the mother, who so passionately loved them, but she would not thwart them, and herself made arrangements for their joining Prussian regiments temporarily, in order that they might have the best military training possible before they took active service in their own country.

Thus when the war with France broke out, her two sons were officers in a Prussian regiment, and she knew that they were bound in honour to risk their lives in an alien cause. The agony of anxiety she felt respecting them cannot be expressed. Her husband was at that time ambassador in Paris, and the whole family, except the soldier sons, were established in the Greek Embassy there.

A short time before Paris was besieged, M. Rangabé had been sent by his Government on a special mission to Constantinople, which was to detain him there for some months. When the siege therefore was just about to commence, Caroline Rangabé found herself alone in the beleaguered city with her young children, and one son old enough to be ordered by the authorities in power to take his place on the ramparts and fight against the Prussian troops, which included his own two brothers.

This unendurable prospect, coupled with the dread of privation for her children while the siege lasted, made her unspeakably anxious to get out of Paris before the bombardment actually commenced, when it would be impossible to escape. But there was the usual difficulty ; in her husband's absence she had not the ready money necessary for the transit of her large party, children and servants, and there remained barely four-and-twenty hours before the investment of the city would be complete. She wrote in despair to her sister in Oxford, who went at once to the Bank and asked whether it was still possible to send

money to Paris. The managers said it could be done by telegraphing to Messrs. Coutts' officials there, and so great was the sympathy evoked by Madame Rangabé's position, that they told her sister she need not so much as consider whether her balance in their hands were sufficient for the purpose, as they would gladly forward whatever might be required.

Next morning, when Paris was in wild confusion, and Caroline Rangabé believed all hope of escape was at an end, a man suddenly walked into her *salon*, too hurried to say whence he came, and placing £100 on the table, he muttered quickly, "On vous envoie cela de l'Angleterre," and as quickly disappeared.

Two hours later, with the utmost difficulty, the family succeeded in making their escape from Paris, and came on to England, where they remained till peace was proclaimed.

Alecco Rangabé returned to his post as soon as possible, and when order was restored his wife and children rejoined him again in Paris.

It was so soon after the horrors of the Commune that they could not go to walk in the Parc Monceau, which was close to their house, because of the ghastly traces still testifying to the massacres which had taken place there; but it was noted as a somewhat remarkable fact, that while all the rare birds and animals in the Jardin des Plantes and every living thing which could be utilised for food had been devoured by the famishing people during the siege, the little Rangabés' canary birds, which had been left in charge of a servant, were found alive and unhurt in their cage; their safety having been due to the Greek flag flying on the roof of the house, which proclaimed it to be an Embassy, and therefore safe from all intrusion.

Scarcely had Caroline Rangabé found herself once more in a settled home with her husband and children, when the first of the heavy calamities, which were eventually to bear her down to the grave, fell crushingly upon her.

The youngest of her soldier sons, a charming high-spirited young man, who had shown great gallantry throughout the war, and had met with many striking adventures, was found one morning lying unconscious before the door of his general's tent, where he had been on guard all night—he had broken a blood-vessel on the lungs—and so soon as he could be moved he was sent home to his mother.

Then began an untiring heart-broken struggle on her part to hold him back from the death that had already so nearly claimed him, and at one time it almost seemed as if she might gain the victory. He was so far recovered that he was able to go with his elder brother to Egypt, where he was ordered to winter by the doctors, and with many a pang she let him pass out of her sight, in the hope that he might return to her convalescent. At first the accounts were good,

but after a time there came a letter to say that he had been seized with a passionate longing to see his mother again, and he was starting for home. "In one fortnight," he wrote to her, "I shall be with you again ; but it seems such a long, long fortnight."

On the day when the fortnight ended, he lay dead in a hospital at Alexandria, taken too suddenly for his mother to reach him before the end. Caroline Rangabé had lost little children before and had borne it resignedly, but her unselfish grief for her "darling Emil," as she termed him, was rendered almost unbearable by her intense pity for his bright young life, cut off in the midst of all his guileless ambitions and brilliant hopes. It shattered her own health fatally.

There is a well-known terrible malady which the late Dr. Abercromby, the celebrated Edinburgh physician, declared to be induced by distress of mind more than by any other cause ; and it came in full force upon her now, during the sleepless nights and days of aching regret which followed Emil's death.

During the three years of intense and unceasing physical pain that ensued, she never relaxed in her care and labour for her husband's interests and for the welfare and even the pleasures and amusements of her surviving family. It is a rule in the Greek Church that the anniversary of a death should be observed by a solemn religious service performed in the sanctuary and attended by all the friends and relations. Before the day came for Emil to be thus commemorated, Caroline Rangabé was in renewed and deep anxiety for her other soldier son, who was, in fact, slowly dying from the effects of the campaign. In the midst of her own great suffering she watched over him—Aristide by name—as long as her failing strength would allow.

Her husband was then representing his King at the Court of Berlin, but she could no longer take her place in the social functions of the Corps Diplomatique, among whom she had been much admired for her intellectual gifts and keen penetration of character, often manifested by a little gentle irony in which there was never a trace of ill-nature. She could only receive visits from her colleagues lying on her couch, and the English Ambassadors of that time—Lady Odo Russell—was her unfailing friend, going to sit with her constantly and showing unceasing kindness and sympathy.

A gleam of brightness, destined, however, to fade into deeper night, came to her a year before the end in the marriage—a veritable love match—of her eldest daughter with a young English gentleman.

This happy event was followed by a new cause of alarm. Her youngest son, who had always been one of the most robust, was at Carlsruhe, following a course of study there with so much ardour that he completely overworked himself and fell dangerously ill.

A telegram from a doctor announced to his mother that he was in a most critical condition, and for the first time in her life she was



HELENA DE PETROFF, IN GREEK DRESS.

unable to go to the succour of a child who required her help. What this was to her intensely loving nature may be imagined. Her husband was engaged in some intricate political duties which precluded his going to Carlsruhe, and all that she could do was to send off her eldest unmarried daughter to attend to her ailing brother as best she could.

Arrived at Carlsruhe, she found that the doctors had placed him in a convent of German deaconesses, whose function it was to nurse the sick. These good ladies proved most rigid and uncompromising as to their rules, and at first they refused to allow their

patient's sister to see him or to enter their cloistered house at all. She possessed, however, a great deal of her mother's energy and determination, and she so eloquently proved to them that it was impossible she, quite a young girl, should remain alone at an hotel, that at last they gave way and allowed her to lodge in their house and remain with her brother by day.

He eventually recovered, and his mother had the happiness of seeing him once—but only once—again.

During the whole course of her own most trying illness, Caroline Rangabé was absolutely uncomplaining. Her one object was to conceal her sufferings so that they might not sadden her children, for whom she was always trying to devise new pleasures and interests, to prevent them from dwelling with any mournful forebodings on her condition.

From the first she refused to take the opiates with which



PRINCESS CHARICLEA LOBANOW, DAUGHTER OF MRS. RANGABÉ, IN GREEK DRESS.

the physicians sought to deaden the continual pain she endured. She said she was content to bear it wholly unrelieved, so that she might keep her mind perfectly clear in order to conduct all the affairs of her family in the manner most calculated to promote their happiness.

When she was already so ill that the least movement was torture to her, M. Rangabé was told by a zealous friend that there was a physician in Geneva who was an expert in this special malady, and that if his wife could only be placed under his personal care she would infallibly recover.

Her husband was a man of sanguine temperament, and he so entirely believed this flattering prognostic, that he urged her strenuously to undertake the journey, not realising, doubtless, the terrible ordeal it would be to her. She had often written jestingly to her sister of the heroic conjugal sacrifices she had made in swallowing all the unpleasant medicines which her husband persuaded her to try, according to the recommendations of many amateur advisers ; but the sacrifice which she made in consenting to travel from Berlin to Geneva, in her condition of intense suffering, was worthy of a martyr. We will not dwell on what it cost her, and she never had the faintest hope that it could be of any avail. As she was being carried up the stairs of the hotel at Geneva she told her young daughter not to expect that she would ever leave it alive, and she was right.

Six weeks before her death, a most unexpected blow struck her like a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

Her young married daughter, from whom she had parted less than a year before as a lovely bride radiant with happiness, had been suddenly taken from all to whom she was dear, and had died five days after the birth of an infant daughter.

In the last letter, written in pencil, and almost illegible, which her sister ever received from Caroline Rangabé, she bade her not grieve too much for the fate of her bright, pretty Zoza, tragic as it was. Her mother felt, she said, that she had at least had ten months of perfect happiness, and had she lived, she might have gone through as strained and difficult a life as her own had been, only she wished she were not so haunted by the vision of the child's fair sweet face, her blue eyes shining with all the joyousness of her wedding morning, as she had seen her last.

Three weeks after this calamity had been announced to her, a final blow fell upon her which could not be concealed, little as she was able to bear it in her great weakness. She was told that Aristide, her second soldier son, had succumbed to the malady, which he had contracted on the Prussian battle-field. She received these tidings in almost complete silence. It was the last stroke, and the end was at hand for herself.

She had implored her sister, who earnestly desired to go to her, not

to give her the grief of knowing that another one who loved her was to have the bitter pain of witnessing her sufferings. It was enough, she said, that she could not hide them from her husband and children. Yet on the last night of her life, in the wandering of utter exhaustion, her mind went back to the old Scottish home and to the companion who had shared with her the happy days of childhood, and all night long she called for her sister, using the playful familiar name with which she had been wont to address her, and, with that last word upon her lips in memory of her native land, her noble spirit passed to other spheres.

Caroline Rangabé was laid in the "Cimetière Plainpalais" at Geneva, followed on foot by every Greek the city contained, wearing the national colours. Her children were taken by a compassionate lady friend to the church where the funeral service was performed, in order that they might obey the invariable Greek custom of giving the *Τελευ αἶος ἀσπασμὸς*, the last kiss, to the receptacle where their mother lay enshrined. They had tried to be calm and courageous, as they knew she would have wished them to be; but they broke down hopelessly then, and the vast assembled crowd were all moved to sorrow and pity at the sad spectacle.

When the grave was reached, several speakers commented, as was the national habit, on the noble character of their late ambassadress—too sadly lost to them. Only the heart-broken husband could not speak; his tribute to her memory was afterwards inscribed on her monument in these words—

"Γενναίος ῥίζης Σκωττικῆς—καλὸς καὶ θάλλων κλάδος
σύζυγος μήτηρ Ἑλλαννίς καὶ κλέος τῆς ἐλλάδος
τὸ γήϊνον τῆς ἔνδυμα κατέθεσ' ἐν Γενεῇ
κ' ἡ οὐρανία τῆς ψυχῇ εἰς οὐρανούς ἀνέβη."

The touching verse may be freely translated thus—

"A blossom fair from Scotland's shore
Bloomed bright on Hellas' classic soil;
Geneva saw her upward soar,
Her earthly trammels felt no more,
Where angel spirits rest from toil."

Those who mourned the death of Caroline Rangabé with the keenest sorrow have reason now to be thankful that she was taken from the evil to come; for on the 17th of last April, when war broke out between Greece and Turkey, one of her surviving sons and the husband of her daughter, who had long been in active service as Greek officers, were already with their regiments in the foremost ranks of the Hellenic troops, full of ardent enthusiasm, and ready and willing to die for their country.

COLONEL FANE'S SECRET.

BY SYDNEY HODGES.

THE PROLOGUE.

A WAGONETTE was drawn up under the trees that bordered a narrow lane, leading off the high road.

It was long past midnight, and the night was intensely dark—so dark, in fact, that the two occupants of the vehicle could scarcely discern each other.

"Take the reins, Jack," said the one who occupied the driver's seat.

"You are still bent on your mad scheme, Fane," returned the other, shifting his place to that of the driver, who handed him the reins as he descended.

"Still! Did you ever know me turn back when I had once set my heart on a thing? It is not likely I shall do so now. It maddens me to think she should have died without my seeing her again. My darling! What she must have endured! I could curse them for keeping us apart."

"I feel all that, Fane; but what can you gain by what you are going to do to-night? If you were detected, they might take you for a burglar."

"Let them; I will risk all that."

"You cannot even be sure of her room."

"Yes, I can. I have watched the light in her bedroom too often not to know that."

"She may be placed in her coffin and fastened down."

"I have the means to meet even that emergency. It is useless to try to prevent me. I have inspected the place from a distance by daylight, and I see my way clearly. We are only going over the old arguments again. I tell you I *must* see her. A feeling prompts me which I cannot resist. We are only losing time."

"Well, I trust to heaven you will come back all right. You will find me here."

"A thousand thanks, Jack, for helping me in this strait. I shall not be long."

He glided away. As he emerged from the trees, the increased light revealed the fact that he was a tall man of strong build. He strode rapidly, but with light tread, down the lane to the main road. Crossing this, he mounted the opposite bank, and reached some park palings. Running his hand along them, and finding there

were no nails, he sprang lightly to the top and dropped into the park.

It was at this point that the palings approached nearest to the house, which was evidently an erection of some importance, with terraces and well-ordered grounds in front, and walled gardens and glass houses in the rear. A wing of the mansion, with a balcony, ran out well towards the park, from which it was divided only by a few flower beds and a low iron railing.

Pausing a few moments to listen, Fane advanced noiselessly across the grass, surmounted the iron rail, and the next moment was standing beneath the balcony at a point where a window above opened on to it, in which a dim light was seen through closely drawn curtains.

The spot seemed familiar to him, for he made at once to some outbuildings, somewhat to the left of the wing. It was lighter here, being quite away from the trees, and he uttered a low exclamation of satisfaction as his eyes fell on a short ladder, such as is used by gardeners. Lifting this without difficulty, he carried it round the angle of the wall, and placed it against the balcony, above which it projected only a foot or two.

"Thank heaven!" he muttered. "Now if the window is unfastened, I shall have no difficulty. I shall look on her dear face once more."

The next moment he had mounted the ladder, dropped into the balcony, and was before the window. To his inexpressible relief, he found it was closed, but not fastened.

In spite of himself, his heart was palpitating almost audibly. He turned away a moment, gasping for breath. It was still very dark; but a dim light from a rising moon was stealing through the clouds.

The stillness was intense. The whole mansion was wrapped in the deepest silence, and there was not a sound without save the dull beat of the surf on the beach two miles away.

He turned to the window again, and raised it with the utmost caution. Then putting aside the curtains, he noiselessly entered the room.

It was the chamber of Death! A shaded lamp was burning on a table in one corner, and by its dim light, all the objects in the room were visible.

On the usual tressels, covered with a cloth, was an elaborately ornamented oak coffin, almost hidden by a profusion of beautiful flowers.

Controlling himself as best he could, Reginald Fane stole towards the coffin; but he had not advanced half way when a sudden thought struck him, and he turned at once to the door. As he rather anticipated, it was locked on the outside. The room was evidently shut for the night; there was little chance of his being disturbed.

He turned again towards the coffin, and, carefully removing some of the wreaths, gazed on the lid.

"As I anticipated," he said, "it is fastened down; but I am prepared even for this." He removed more of the flowers; the coffin plate was exposed.

The Lady Vera Colborne,
Only daughter of the 6th Earl of Seagrove.
Died August 8th, 185-.
Aged 22 years.

Long and wistfully he gazed at it. His heart was racked by such an intensity of suffering that he sank down on his knees beside the coffin, his face buried in his hands.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" he moaned. "How is it possible to part with you?" He rose to his feet. "The wretches," he said; "if they had not kept you from me, you might have been alive now! Your heart was broken. In spite of them, I *will* look upon your dear face again!"

He drew from his side pocket a screw-driver and a small spanner, and the next moment was at work upon the screws. Despair gave him energy, and one by one the screws yielded. Then he carefully raised the lid, and the beautiful face beneath was exposed. How calm it was! How lovely!

"Never in life," he murmured, "were you more beautiful! Oh, to think that it is thus we meet again!"

He stooped and pressed his lips upon her forehead, her cheek, her lips. How cold they were! And yet the kisses were so fervent they might almost have warmed her into life.

Long and silently he gazed, filled with emotions such as words could never convey. Then, with a long-drawn sigh, he turned away and lifted the coffin-lid for the purpose of replacing it. It was heavy, and with some difficulty—for he was fearful of making the least sound—he placed it across the coffin, still keeping the face uncovered. Then he drew a pair of scissors from his pocket and, carefully parting a lock of hair from the white cheek, was proceeding to cut it off, when——

What was it? His heart seemed to stop. A sensation almost of fear went through him. What was it? There was a change; but what? He could not be mistaken—the *head had moved*! And yet it seemed incredible. It had been perfectly straight when he lifted the lid—of this he was certain—now it was slightly turned to one side. Oh, yes, his kisses had done it! But yet they were so light, so tender, out of respect for the dead, that they could not have caused this change; and yet what else could have caused it? It was a mystery he could not solve.

He again raised the scissors, and the lock was separated. He

stooped lower to remove it carefully. Again that sensation that was almost fear ran through him. He could not be mistaken; it was no delusion. There was a faint quivering of the eyelids, then another slight movement of the head back to its former position.

That calmness which comes to most of us in acute emergencies was over him now.

"Great Heaven! If she should be alive!" he exclaimed.

He stooped over her, lower still, until his lips almost touched hers. He could not doubt it. A faint, almost imperceptible breath seemed to fan his cheek. He passed noiselessly over to the lamp, and brought it to the side of the coffin. The full light fell upon the face. Again there was the quivering of the eyelids, and—a more certain sign than all—there was a tinge of colour in the cheeks. He brought a small hand-glass from the dressing-table and held it before her lips, then held it in the light of the lamp. The surface was dulled.

He did all this mechanically, like a man walking in his sleep. The emergency was so great, so terrible, that he hardly dared to think. Yet the surmise had grown to certainty. She was alive, and he had saved her! Hereafter he might spend hours on his knees thanking God for His great mercy; now he must act.

He removed the coffin-lid again, and placed his ear upon her breast, over her heart. Yes, there was a distinct movement. He could hesitate no longer. What was he to do? Alarm the inmates and let them know the daughter of the house was living? There was only the grim old lord and his two sons, who would not be likely to care over much. The mother had long since been dead. Should he rouse them? What would they think of him, even if he had brought the daughter back to life? Immediate action was necessary he knew.

He leant over her again. A wild thought had entered his mind—a thought so daring that he put it from him at first, but soon it grew into firmer shape.

"They have killed her amongst them," he said; "and they have taken a last farewell of her. Why should they ever look on her again—why ever know she is alive?"

In another moment he was outside the window, and in the next was down the ladder and speeding across the park. In less than two minutes he was beside the wagonette.

"Is that you, Reggy?" asked his friend.

"Yes. Don't think me quite mad when I tell you she is alive."

"Alive! Your troubles have turned your brain."

"You shall see for yourself. Have you your flask?"

"Yes, I never go out at night without it."

"Quick! Give it me. What is in it?"

"Brandy."

"Now come with me at once."

"And leave the horse?"

"Oh! the old mare will stand. Tie the reins to the tree, and follow me. Bring the rug with you."

A few minutes later they were both on the balcony.

"Don't come in yet," said Fane.

He passed through the window again.

The girl in the coffin had not moved, but there was a slight, but distinct heaving of the chest.

Her lover placed the flask to her lips, and let a few drops trickle in between them. There was a perceptible movement of the lips in response, and then a convulsive twitching of the throat. Fane went to the window.

"Now come in, Jack," he said. "I wished to be sure before I called you. Now look for yourself."

His friend advanced to the coffin and gazed at the beautiful face with intense surprise.

"She is alive, no doubt. How marvellous that you should have come! How will you let them know?" he said in a tone of utter bewilderment.

"I shall not let them know. My mind is made up. I have brought her back to life. She is mine by every law, human and divine. I have thought it all out. I shall take her away to-night."

"You dare not. It would be madness."

"It would be madness to leave her to her misery. No! if you will not help me, I must do it myself."

"But it will be discovered."

"Never! We can fill the coffin, and fasten it down again. Oh! I tell you my mind is made up. Now help me to lift her gently. Stay—spread the rug on the bed first—so. Now to wrap her in the rug and my ulster. What a mercy it is a thick one! Leave her room to breathe. Now come with me."

They descended the ladder, and Fane led the way to the glass houses. In taking up the ladder he had seen some short logs, cut—evidently for firewood—in lengths of two or three feet. Taking some of these under their arms, they returned to the bedroom, and partly filling the richly-lined coffin with the logs, they covered them with a soft blanket from the bed, the folds of which held all securely in their places.

It took but a few minutes to fasten down the lid of the coffin again. Then the flowers were arranged as they had been before. There was a hearth-brush by the side of the fireplace, and with this all traces of the litter were removed. Indeed, the profusion of flowers was so great that, when they were replaced on the coffin, no one could have detected the least disturbance. Tenderly and quietly Fane lifted the beloved form and bore it outside the window. Then placing it in his friend's arms he got on to the ladder. "Now give her to me," he said. "She is as light as a feather. My darling, nothing shall ever part us again."

He descended with the girl in his arms. His friend followed, having carefully shut the window first. The ladder was replaced, and with rapid steps they proceeded across the park. There was no difficulty in lifting their precious burden over the palings, and in a few minutes they regained the wagonette. The old mare was standing quietly cropping the grass by the roadside. Fane got inside, still holding the beloved form closely in his arms, while his friend untied the reins and mounted the box. The next moment they were in the main road, going at the best pace of the mare, who had been a famous trotter in her time.

Two days later the funeral obsequies of the Lady Vera Colborne were performed with all due honours, while the Lady Vera Colborne herself lay convalescent in the house of her lover, fifteen miles away, tended by Fane's elder sister and a nurse who had lived with them from childhood; these two and their frail charge being, for obvious reasons, the only occupants of the house.

THE STORY.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE BEACH.

THE waves were lapping lazily on the beach at St. Brelade's Bay. The sea lay smooth as a mirror, with here and there, far out from the shore, a line or two like frosted silver where the summer breezes played beyond the headlands. Close to the shore the pale, transparent green of the wavelets broke upon the delicate pink of the rocks. The southward-facing headlands lay in a deep blue shade, with an occasional projection catching the eastern sunlight like a splash of gold. A morning to lure the veriest sluggard from his downy pillow.

Coming along the sands with a quick step was a girl of nineteen or thereabouts. She came from the direction of the bathing-sheds, and presented a lovely picture in that bright morning air. Her head seemed to be set in an aureole of gold, the result of the eastern splendour falling on the masses of her loosened hair. Her rapid pace, almost a run, had sent the warm blood glowing to her cheeks. Her eyes sparkled with health and youth. She wore a white morning wrapper, close fitting, in the prevailing fashion, yet not so tight as to restrain the free motion of her limbs. Her broad hat, set somewhat back, left the perfection of her face unconcealed.

She climbed the low rocks which lie about midway across the bay, and continued her quick walk towards the bold headland which encloses the bay on the south.

Near the rocks which lie scattered at the foot of this headland was a man with one companion—a huge dog. He was above the middle

height, with a somewhat unusual breadth of chest and strength of limb. His features were regular, his mouth and chin firm. The close-cut beard did not conceal the outline of the lower part of the face; it rather added strength and character to it. His eyes were grey, but with a depth of shade in them which made them look almost dark. His complexion was tanned by the sun to a rich brown tint, indicative of an outdoor life.

His canine companion was enormous—a genuine wolf-hound from the Pyrenees. It answered to the name of Orage.

His master was amusing himself by throwing pieces of wood far out to sea, and Orage, with barks whose thunder proved he was not misnamed, dashed into the calm waters time after time and swam with marvellous speed and unerring precision to recover the object which was causing both man and beast such evident amusement.

The former was unconscious of the girl's approach. She had almost reached them when Orage emerged with his long coat and huge jaws dripping with salt water. He dropped the recovered piece of wood at his master's feet, and as it was again about to be hurled seaward, he caught sight of the girl. In the wild excitement of the moment, he dashed away to meet her. He gave three immense bounds by her side and then reared straight up with his forepaws upon her shoulders, nearly knocking her over and splashing her with sand and water. Then he was back again in an instant barking wildly for the piece of wood.

But the master had turned and had seen the catastrophe, and a look of anger flashed into his face.

"Down, sir!" he exclaimed, bringing the piece of wood with a by no means gentle thwack down on the dog's shoulder. "How dare you?" Then turning to the girl he said:

"I beg ten thousand pardons. I am so very sorry. The dog's spirits have run away with him."

"It does not matter in the very least, thank you," was the response. "I am very fond of dogs."

"Oh, but pardon me, it does! He has dirtied your dress all over!"

The dog was only momentarily subdued. His spirits broke out again. Another dash was impending. His master laid a firm hand on his collar.

"Quiet, sir!" he said in a voice which almost drowned the dog's bark. "Will you kindly pass on whilst I hold him? Then there can be no repetition of the catastrophe. I cannot tell you how sorry I am, but the dog is young."

"He is a splendid fellow," was the answer. She looked as if she would like to pat him, but, full of life though she was, she had a strict sense of propriety. So with a little inclination of her head and a murmured "Thank you," she passed on.

The man's interest in his occupation had evidently flagged. He threw the piece of wood languidly out to sea, and the dog splashed in after it. Then the master sat down upon the sand and gazed after the girl's slight form as she sped rapidly up the zig-zag path among the rocks at the end of the beach.

"It is worth coming for a morning's walk to see a face like that," he said. "Who the dickens is she, I wonder?"

The girl's name, had he known it, was as pretty as her face—Vera Fane.

CHAPTER II.

AN ACCIDENT.

VERA was by this time high up in the grassy nooks above the cliffs, gathering wild flowers. The man shifted his seat and sat down under a rock, at the same time making Orage understand that he must remain quiet. Then he took out a sketch book, and began to sketch.

Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour passed, and then Vera might have been seen descending the steep path by which she had ascended. Just above the rock, beneath which the sketcher sat concealed from view, there were some loose and slippery stones in the path. As ill luck would have it there was a sudden blast from a neighbouring quarry as she reached this spot. She gave a slight start, her foot slipped and the next moment bent under her, slightly spraining her ankle. The pain was acute, and she could not restrain a little cry.

The sound brought up the sketcher immediately, but his dog was even quicker.

"Back, Orage," his master cried. "Lie down, sir!"

Vera was trying to hobble down the path, but it was a feeble attempt. Her face grew deadly pale. She felt quite faint, and was obliged to sit down.

The young man had reached the spot by this time. "You are hurt," he said.

"I am afraid it is a slight sprain," she replied.

"And that is terribly painful, I know. What can be done? Have you far to go?"

"Only to the end of the beach."

"You must let me help you."

"Oh, thank you very much; but I think it will be better in a few minutes. I don't think it is a regular sprain."

The conventionalities of life creep in even in the worst emergencies. Vera felt that it was awkward to accept help from a stranger, or even to be talking to him. He saw that she felt it, but he could not leave her in this condition.

The south side of the bay is not a frequented spot. As far as any

chance help went, they might be in the wilds of Africa. Indeed, the coast of Jersey generally is but sparsely populated.

Vera rose, and made another attempt to walk, but it was a failure. She only accomplished two or three steps, then sat down again.

This decided her companion.

"You really must accept help," he said; "or stay: will you sit here while I go for assistance? We might bring a chair or something, and carry you home."

"Oh, no, thank you. I really cannot return in that ignominious fashion."

"Then you must take my arm."

"I am afraid I must. It is evident I cannot walk alone."

The arm was offered in a moment. She drew herself up by its aid, and step by step they descended the remainder of the slope.

"I am sure the exertion of walking home will make you worse," he said. "You had better adopt my suggestion."

"It is giving you so much trouble. I would much rather walk if I possibly can."

"It would be no trouble. Orage would keep guard over you effectually until I return."

"It is very good of you. They could send the pony down for me. I could ride without any difficulty."

"Then will you kindly direct me where to go?"

"If you will ask for Colonel Fane's when you get to the hotel, anyone will show you the house."

"Colonel Fane?"

"Yes."

"And will you keep Orage with you?"

"That will entail your coming all the way back. I cannot give you that trouble."

"Why not?"

"Well, it is so far out of your way. That is, if you are staying at St. Brelade's?"

"I slept here last night. I am only wandering, in a desultory sort of a way, round the island. It does not matter in the least which way I go, or how long I stay. I had better return to see you safe home—that is, if you don't object?"

"Oh no, indeed! How could I, after your kindness? I was only thinking of the trouble."

"Which is nothing, I assure you. Then Orage will stay. Here, sir, lie down."

The dog came to the side of the girl, and stretching himself out, put his huge head in her lap, and turned his human eyes up to hers.

"What a splendid dog he is!" said she. "I shall be quite happy with him."

"Have you a comfortable seat?"

"Yes, quite, thank you!"

"Let me put this big stone behind you. It will make you still more comfortable."

"Thanks very much?"

"And now, Orage, behave yourself! Do you hear?"

The dog looked languidly up at him, as if thinking that he need not be told how to behave under the circumstances. Then, raising his hat, the young man departed.

Vera watched him until his long quick strides had taken him rapidly over the central rocks and round the bend of the low headland which here falls to the beach. Then she looked down at the dog.

"Who is your master, Orage? What a pity it is you can't speak and tell me all about him. There is something in his face that seems familiar to me, but I can't remember what."

In about half an hour figures loomed in sight again—a boy leading a pony down a pathway to the right, and the stranger walking in advance.

"Colonel Fane was not down," the latter said as he approached Vera. "I sent a message to let him know what had happened, and we have brought your steed. Now, may I lift you on to him? It will be the easiest way for you to mount."

Vera felt the force of the remark, but for all that she blushed when she felt herself lifted bodily from the ground, as if she had been a child. It was the right foot which was hurt, so it did not interfere with the use of the stirrup. They set out towards home.

"Are you quite sure I am not taking you out of your way?" she asked.

"Quite sure. I am going back to the hotel to breakfast."

Vera felt that it would be but hospitable to invite him to breakfast, but she did not like to take this upon herself, so she modified the idea.

"I am sure my father would be glad of the opportunity of thanking you for all your kindness. I don't know what I could possibly have done without you."

"I am so glad I happened to be near. My erratic habits have resulted in some good. Perhaps I may have the opportunity of seeing Colonel Fane some other time. I am leaving immediately after breakfast." They were nearing the hotel. "I hope you will not be a sufferer long," he said. "If I should return here in a few days perhaps you will allow me to call and inquire?"

"Oh yes; it is very good of you to think of it."

In another moment he had turned towards the hotel. Orage lingered, as if uncertain whether his duties were at an end. His doubts were resolved by a whistle from his master, who again raised his hat.

"Good-bye, Orage! I wish you were mine," said Vera, as the dog rushed off.

Vera was soon tucked up on a sofa in the dining-room and recounting to her father the adventures of the morning while she sipped some tea. The Colonel made it the occasion for descanting on the disadvantages of early morning walks.

"You might have lain there for hours without anyone coming near you at this time of day. Lucky the fellow was there. Who is he, do you know?"

"I have not the least idea," said Vera. "I only know he was very kind."

Later in the day Vera received this letter:

"The Chalet, St. Martin.

"MY DEAREST VERA.—Here we are settled in this most delightful nook. A sweet little house overlooking the lovely bay, with endless gardens and shrubberies and fruits and flowers thrown in *ad lib.* Fred is in a most blissful state of content, and promises to stay a month. We think the island quite charming, and mean to come every year.

"You must fulfil your promise, and come to us at once. I am sure the Colonel can spare you, having your old nurse to look after him; so I shall expect you within twelve hours. If you can let me know the time, I will meet you at Gorey, which, as you know, is our station.

"Ever yours affectionately,

"FANNY LINDSAY."

This letter found Vera still on a couch with a novel in her hand, from which, however, her thoughts were perpetually wandering to her adventure of the morning. It was quite provoking that she had not ascertained the good-looking stranger's name. Even the cautious old Colonel had said she should have invited him to come in. Provoking that she had not done so, but she had not felt quite sure that it was the right thing to do. It would have been better to have acted naturally after all.

But then Vera had no mother to look after her; and her old nurse, who had brought her up from infancy, always kept a strict eye upon her and impressed her with the fact that she could not be too particular—especially with strange men, who were supposed to roam the world like roaring lions, and with the same gastronomic propensities.

For three days Vera had to keep to her couch, reading, working, thinking, and gazing over the summer sea. Late in the afternoon of the third day she heard a loud voice on the beach below.

"Orage! Orage! Orage!"

She looked out, and there, walking up towards the house, was the stranger who had come to her rescue. The dog was lingering behind

for another splash in the waves, for the weather was sultry and he preferred water to air.

Presently there was a rap at the door, and Vera heard the step of the nurse going to open it. Then came the stranger's voice.

"This is Colonel Fane's, I think?"

"Yes, sir," answered the nurse.

"How provoking papa is not at home!" thought Vera. "Nurse is sure not to ask him in!"

"I merely called to inquire for Miss Fane. She met with an accident the other day," the visitor continued.

"She is better, thank you, sir," answered the nurse; "but she still keeps to her couch."

"I am sorry to hear that. Is the Colonel at home?"

"No, sir."

"Why on earth doesn't she say *I am*?" thought Vera. Then the visitor went on:

"Will you kindly say I called to inquire. Mr. ——— But she would not know my name. Say the gentleman who assisted her home."

"Yes, sir."

"I believe the road to the right is the one to St. Aubyn's, is it not?"

"Yes, sir." And then retreating footsteps were heard, and the door closed.

"Provoking!" thought Vera. "Anybody with a grain of sense would have brought the message to me! Nurse," she added as the old domestic entered the room, "why in the world did you not bring the message to me?"

"What message, Miss Vera?"

"Why—why—didn't he call to inquire how I was?"

"Yes, miss; and I told him."

"But it seemed so rude to send him away without asking him in."

"What, Miss Vera? With you on the couch, and your papa out!"

"But I can sit up quite well, you know."

"No, Miss Vera, I did not know. You said this morning you couldn't put your foot to the ground."

This was a clincher. Vera had literally not a leg to stand upon, so she was silent.

She was not a flirt—far from it—but life was dull at St. Brelade's, and this little incident was an event in her life. The Colonel was poor, and had come to Jersey, years ago to retrench. Vera had seen little of the world, and next to nothing of society. She had been sent for a year to a finishing school at Brighton, and there she had struck up a warm friendship with a schoolfellow named Fanny Chetwode. The said Fanny had now become Mrs. Lindsay, and her advent in Jersey, for a summer holiday, had brought the before-mentioned letter to Vera.

On the fourth morning after the accident, Vera's patience came to an end. She could just hobble across the room, and she made up her mind to depart, so she broke the subject to her father at breakfast.

"I am thinking of going to Fanny to-day, if you can spare me," she said.

"But are you sufficiently recovered, my love?"

"Oh, yes—I walked across the room this morning quite easily."

This, as we know, was not strictly true, but under the circumstances the lapse may be forgiven.

"Well, I have no objection if you are sure you feel up to it, my love," said the Colonel. "What time will you have the pony-carriage? I think you had better drive all the way, as you can't walk from the station at Gorey."

This was exactly what Vera wanted, but as she had announced a perfect recovery, she hardly ventured to propose it.

So the pony-carriage was ordered after luncheon.

CHAPTER III.

A SURPRISE.

"YOU poor little soul! Fancy your being laid up for three whole days with that horrid ankle. I have been dying to see you, but really I have had such heaps of things to do in setting my house in order that I have not had a moment."

Fanny Lindsay was not insincere, but she was always "dying" to see people whom she might easily have seen by the expenditure of a couple of hours, if she had possessed any system; but she was impulse from head to foot.

After all there is something very fascinating in impulse when it develops itself in the form of affection towards yourself. You may mistrust the depth, but a pleasant surface is always more attractive than an unknown depth. If affection exist, one likes to see its outward and visible signs.

"And Fred hates me to be away from him for a moment," she continued. "He has a very wise friend from town staying with him—a dreadfully clever man. He is always poking about the rocks with a hammer, and digging out all sorts of queer-looking things that would be much better left alone, for all the good they do. I think we are getting to know a great deal too much about the world. I like to believe in Adam and Eve, and Noah and the Ark."

"But doesn't your friend believe in them?" asked Vera, somewhat shocked.

"Good gracious, no! He doesn't believe in anything but what

he can understand. According to him the world is about a hundred million years old, instead of four thousand, as we were taught at school. Almost all the men now-a-days think as he does."

"But does Mr. Lindsay hold the same views?"



ON THE FOURTH MORNING VERA'S PATIENCE CAME TO AN END.

"Well no, not exactly, but then he's quite indifferent. I don't think he has any views at all. He goes to church because it's respectable to do so, but he yawns dreadfully all the time. But never mind the men, come and take off your things. Or stay—let

me take them off for you. You musn't try your poor foot too much. I'll settle you in my favourite seat under those old trees yonder, where you can look out over the sea; and we'll have tea there. What heaps we have to talk about!"

"But are you alone?"

"Yes. Fred and his friend Mr. Bates are wandering about the beach somewhere, one with his pipe, the other with his hammer. As for Hugh, he has been on the trot for days."

"And who is Hugh?"

"Why, my brother from Australia; but of course you do not know him. He only came home last month and ran over here with us. You must have heard me talk of him."

"I daresay, but I had forgotten."

"And what of the Colonel? Is he still speculating? And is your old nurse the same immaculate creature as of old?"

"Yes. She rules us with a rod of iron."

"Never mind; she saves you no end of bother. I feel already that the cares of housekeeping are quite weighing me down."

And so the two friends rattled on all through the afternoon—or rather, one rattled and the other listened. And the evening shadows began to lengthen towards the east; and the sun sank into a wondrous maze of crimson cloud with pale green spaces between, in which one could picture mystic seas and capes and golden sand-bars, with here and there a solitary cloud-pine standing like a lone sentinel on the margin of a silent, moveless sea. A cloud landscape as weird and wonderful as Martin's 'Plains of Heaven.' And by-and-by another glory—a glory of silver and ivory—arose far out in the east, where, in the dim distance the spire of Coutance pierced the silent air. And, while one marvelled at the mingling of the silver and crimson light, the moon, with its spirit face, came from out the clouds, like an angel sent to console the world for the death of day.

But while all these magical changes were going on—changes which not one in a thousand condescends to notice, so satiated are we with Nature's infinite variety, so absorbed in our own petty plans—the friends dressed and found their way to the drawing-room; and the gentlemen, who had returned late, had gone to put themselves into the modern picturesqueness of white ties and swallow-tailed coats.

And while Vera was luxuriating in the depths of a remarkably low easy chair, the very sight of which would probably have sent our great-grandmothers into hysterics, and Fanny was still pouring forth reminiscences of their school days, the door opened, and in the deepening twilight a tall man entered the room.

The impulsive Fanny exclaimed: "Oh, Hugh! This is my dearest friend Vera. I have been telling her about you, and I expect you to like each other very much."

Then Vera felt that she was getting crimson to the roots of her hair, for the hero of her morning adventure was before her.

He, too, was startled, but they managed to get through the process of shaking hands with tolerable composure.

"Miss Fane your friend!" exclaimed Hugh. "I am very glad to see you here, Miss Fane. It is a proof, I hope, that your foot is all right again."

"What on earth do you mean?" exclaimed Fanny. "When and where did you two become acquainted?"

"Miss Fane and I know each other very well," said her brother, laughing. "I was fortunate enough to be able to assist her in what might have proved a dilemma a few days ago."

"And you never told me."

"How could I? I only returned to-day, and have not had the chance. Besides, it is bad form to boast of one's heroic deeds."

"And you never said a word either, Vera. What fearful conspirators you are!"

"But how could I possibly know my rescuer was your brother?" said Vera, who was beginning to recover her equanimity. "I did not even know his name."

"Well, you will have to tell me all about it by-and-by. It is too bad to steal a march on me in this way. Why, Fred, I thought you were never coming!"

This to her husband, who entered at the moment, and warmly greeted Miss Fane. He was followed by a shortish man with a broad forehead and brown hair, a trifle too long for the prevailing fashion, which as Box says, makes us all look as if we had been cropped for the militia.

"Did you ever know anything like these two, Fred?" said Fanny. "Vera and Hugh, I mean. They have actually been making each other's acquaintance, all unbeknown. Hugh, will you take Vera? Mr. Bates, will you take me? Quite a romantic affair. Fred, you must come alone. I can't separate those two, after their thrilling adventure."

CHAPTER IV.

A SCEPTIC.

IT was a novel experience for Vera to be sitting opposite a man who did not believe in Revelation. She had been brought up in the simple unquestioning faith of our forefathers, involving church twice on Sundays, and prayers morning and evening. To doubt that the world was made in six days, that Eve was created from Adam's rib, that Noah was saved in the ark, or that the sun stood still at Ajalon, was quite beyond the range of any possible thought of hers. She believed in it all implicitly. That there were such things as sceptics

she had of course heard, but to meet one in polite society, and without the appropriate appendages of horns and tail, was, to say the least, surprising.

Mr. Bates, moreover, did not appear to be in any way an evil-disposed man. The lines on his forehead were lines of thought, and his expression was rather amiable than otherwise. He had a way, however, of speaking his mind freely, and was an adept at sarcasm.

"And now," said Mrs. Lindsay, when she had finished her soup, "I expect a full, true, and particular account of this adventure of yours which you have been keeping so secret. The idea of you and Vera knowing each other! Come, Hugh, tell us all about it."

Hugh did not seem inclined to be communicative. He glanced at Vera, who sat next him.

"I am sure Miss Fane could give you a much more graphic account," he said.

"Indeed I cannot. You were the chief actor on the occasion."

"I must beg to dispute that point. The catastrophe befell you. I was only the fortunate instrument that effected the rescue."

"Don't keep us in suspense," said Fanny. "Make yourself an instrument again, and tell us all about it."

"Well," said Chetwode, "it was a lovely morning in early autumn—that is four days ago——"

"Autumn doesn't begin till September the twenty-ninth," interrupted Bates.

"Begin again, Hugh," said Fanny.

"It was a bright morning in late summer. Does that suit you better?" continued Chetwode. "The sea lay like a mirror——"

"That's trite," said Bates.

"The sea lay like a sheet of tin-foil——"

"That's better."

"A tall stranger was amusing himself by throwing a piece of wood into the limpid waves for a huge dog to fetch out."

"Do talk sensibly, Hugh; I want to know what really happened," said Fanny.

"I must tell it my own way or not at all, please. The stranger gazed upward to the beetling cliff, which——"

"Was full of fossils," said Bates.

"Which overhung the beach," said Hugh. "Suddenly a wild scream rang through the startled air——"

"I object to 'startled air,'" said Bates. "You can't startle an impalpable fluid."

"Then we'll leave out the 'startled,'" said Hugh. "Suddenly, on looking up, the stranger beheld a female form clinging to the bare rock at a fearful height above the beach."

"Oh!" exclaimed Vera.

"Isn't that true, Miss Fane?" asked Bates.

"Not if he means me, certainly."

"I mention no names," said Hugh. "Without a moment's pause the stranger climbed the rocks with the agility of a—of a——"

"Monkey," suggested Bates.

"Squirrel," continued Hugh. "He heeded not the laceration of his bleeding palms——"

"Please remember we're at dinner," said Bates.

"In another moment he had the fair form in his arms and bore her to the beach in safety."

"What sort of wings had he?" said Bates.

"How much of all this is true?" asked Fanny.

"Give us a literal version of it," said Lindsay.

"Well, if you won't believe me, I refer you to Miss Fane," said Hugh.

"Come Vera, what was it?" asked Fanny.

"Well," said Vera, "it's quite true that Mr. Chetwode was amusing himself by throwing a piece of wood into the water, and as I was coming down a narrow path close by, I slipped and sprained my ankle, as I told you in my letter."

"Well, and what then?"

"Why, then Mr. Chetwode was kind enough to go and tell them to bring the pony for me."

"What a delightful romance you have spoilt, Miss Fane. Brought me down to the prosaic level of the commonplace," cried Hugh.

"You said you brought her down just now," observed Bates. "Be correct in your facts!"

"I'm not in the humour for facts. This is a night for fancies. Just look at the moon out yonder over the bay. I wish you could see some of our Australian moons."

"You have a lot specially manufactured out there, I suppose," said Bates. "Are they pretty much the same size as ours?"

Vera thought the sceptic by no means a formidable person after all; he seemed full of fun.

"Let me see," said Lindsay. "It's the change of the moon to-night, so we shall probably have fine weather for another fortnight."

"What, haven't you got over that worn-out myth yet?" asked Bates quite seriously.

"Why the moon does affect the weather, doesn't it?" responded Lindsay.

"Not if the most careful observations can be relied on," said Bates. "Besides, if it did, it couldn't be by its changes. The moon doesn't change."

"But she enters on another quarter."

"Merely an arbitrary division of time fixed by us. That won't affect the weather."

"For my part," said Fanny, "I believe in the moon, and in rain-bows, and table-turning, and mesmerism and ghosts. I don't think you believe in anything, Mr. Bates."

"Oh yes; I have the most implicit belief in you, Mrs. Lindsay!"

"How very sweet of you! You're not nearly so dreadful as you profess to be."

"I beg your pardon, I profess nothing. I don't obtrude my opinions on anyone. I despise a man who is always running his head full tilt against the prejudices of others."

"You call our religious opinions our prejudices," said Hugh.

"I am not going to be drawn into a theological discussion," returned Bates. "It is a sheer waste of time. People argue for hours, get very angry, and end where they began."

All this time dinner was progressing, and the dessert was on the table. The moon was shining full into the room now, leaving a square patch of glory on the floor, which looked bright in spite of the lamps.

"What a night for a walk!" said Hugh.

"And I haven't been beyond the garden to-day," replied Fanny.

"I vote we all go," said Lindsay. "Except, of course, the matter-of-fact Bates. He doesn't care for the moon."

"Doesn't he?" retorted Bates. "The moon is about the most interesting object I know. It is the only heavenly body within hail, as it were. I'll go with you, if only to watch it. Perhaps I might catch it in the act of changing," he added slyly.

They all made a move towards the door, but suddenly Mrs. Lindsay stopped.

"I had forgotten Vera's sprained ankle," she said. "I can't leave her alone."

"Oh, the distance to the beach is nothing," answered Vera. "I can easily manage that. Indeed, I have felt no pain all the afternoon."

"Change of air is evidently good for the ankles," said Fanny, laughing.

They sought their hats and wraps, and all sauntered down to the beach. What is it in moonlight which conveys such an intense feeling of stillness? It cannot be the dim light, for dulled sunlight does not give it. Every pebble on the beach, every seaweed-laden rock, every leaf on the trees above, seemed to be the embodiment of silence. Even the light ripples on the beach appeared to break reluctantly, as if hushing their own sound.

Chetwode lingered behind with his sister. "That friend of yours, Fan, is the sweetest girl that ever walked the earth. What do you mean by leading your innocent brother into temptation in this way?"

"I mean to lead you still more into temptation, for I want you to be very fond of Vera. I don't mean to let her walk about on this shingly beach with that bad ankle. You will have to stay behind and take care of her. Here's a capital rock for you to sit upon and watch the moonlight. 'Vera,' she called: 'you must not walk a step further. I command you to sit here while we stroll on. Hugh will take care of you, and if we are too long he can give you his big arm

to help you back to the house. Now, take this shawl and make yourself comfortable."

Vera protested at first at this high-handed proceeding, but Mrs. Lindsay insisted, and Hugh, nothing loth, took his place by her side. Of course, there was a little awkwardness at first, but youth and high spirits prevailed, and they fell into conversation on all kinds of topics. Hugh told her about his life in Australia, and how he hoped to make a fortune there in a few years, though, he added, he would much prefer to make it in England if he had the chance. "But everything is so crowded now-a-days," he said, "especially in London. Do you often go to London, Miss Fane?"

"I have never been there," answered Vera.

"Never been to London!" exclaimed Hugh in surprise. "But my sister told me you had been at school together at Brighton."

"We were, but I never went to London. I travelled from here to Brighton and back by the south coast."

"Oh, I understand. But that must be set right. I must get my sister to ask you over before I go, and I shall have the greatest pleasure in showing you all the sights. I know London well. In fact, I aspired to a literary or artistic life, but fate willed otherwise, there was no room for me. It wants exceptional talent to come to the front in the great city."

They were silent for a few moments, watching the silver lines of the moonlight upon the breaking waves, and Hugh quoted Tennyson, with whom Vera was well acquainted, and then drifted off into Browning, of whose works she knew nothing. Some of the bits Hugh quoted were a revelation to her, and she began to think that her companion might have taken his place among the first even in the great city, had he been so minded.

Presently the rest of the party returned, and Hugh tackled his sister at once on the subject nearest his heart.

"Fanny, do you know your friend has never been in London?"

"I know it—it is too bad. But *nous changerons tout cela*. When we go, she goes with us, whether the Colonel likes it or not. We will finish her education in town."

Meanwhile, on the other side of the island, the Colonel sat writing in his study by the light of a shaded lamp. His table was near the window, the blinds of which had not been drawn down. From time to time he paused in his task, and looked out over the sea which stretched away in the moonlight into infinite distance. The remote past unfolded itself with peculiar distinctness as he gazed, and a deep sadness stole over him. As he sat musing, pen in hand, the door was quietly opened, and the old servant entered the room.

"What is it, Martha?" he asked.

"It is half-past ten, sir. Shall you want anything more?"

"Nothing, thank you. Stay, Martha."

"Yes, sir."

"Come here. I have been thinking of the past, to-night. I don't know what is over me. I have a foreboding of trouble."

"Oh, don't say that, sir. I don't think you have been very well the last few days."

"I have not felt ill, but I am getting an old man. Who knows when the great change may come. Martha, do you remember that night years ago, when we brought her to my house?"

"As well as if it was yesterday, sir. It was a wonderful thing. Almost too much for belief, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes."

"And yet it was not a solitary case. Such a thing has happened before, and will again."

"So you tell me, sir."

"We have kept the secret well, Martha. Vera must know of it one day, but not till I am gone."

"Don't talk about that, sir. It would break her heart."

"But it must come. I have written a paper to-night telling her who she is. I shall always keep it with me, in case of my death. The other paper—the account of the resuscitation—is, as you know, in one of these drawers."

"I know it, sir, but please don't brood over it to-night; you had many happy years."

"Many. Vera is almost a woman now; she will be marrying one day, I suppose. I hope her married life may be as happy as mine was."

"I hope it may, sir."

"Her life is all before her—mine is behind me. The old live in the past, the young in the future. Sometimes it is merciful that the future is hidden."

"You are out of sorts to-night, sir. There may be many happy days before you yet."

"I am not unhappy, but you know my life has not been the same since she died. If it had not been for Vera, I should not have cared to survive her. How like her mother she is. Sometimes I could almost fancy she is before me."

"Well, sir, for her sake you must try and keep up. I wouldn't write any more to-night, sir."

"I will just finish this. I shall not be long, but you need not sit up."

"Good night, sir."

"Good night, Martha."

(To be continued.)

UPON THE THRESHOLD.

"The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
 Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made;
 Stronger by weakness wiser men become,
 As they draw near to their eternal home;
 Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view
 That stand upon the threshold of the new."

Edmund Waller.

A SPECIAL interest attaches to sayings uttered in the very prospect of death by those who stand indeed upon the Borderland, one foot on earth and one in Heaven.

"O, but they say the tongues of dying men
 Enforce attention like deep harmony:
 Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain;
 For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain,"

writes Shakespeare. Yet it is not always of pain that these words breathe, but instead often of some strange bliss hidden from the on-lookers. Besides those more sustained utterances which, like Lyte's swan-song, "Abide with Me," or Michael Angelo's noble sonnet, "On the Brink of Death," have become enshrined in literature, many such "last words" are on record (how many more are on record only in loving hearts!), as the rapt "Hush—Heaven!" of Bishop Villiers; Mrs. Browning's "It is Beautiful!"; Samuel Rutherford's ecstatic "Glory—Glory Dwelleth in Immanuel's Land!"; George Herbert's sweet rhapsodies of anticipation—of which, recording some of them, his biographer, Izaak Walton, says: "These, and the like expressions, which he uttered often, may be said to be his enjoyment of Heaven before he enjoyed it."

"It is a wonderful retrospect upon this world and this life *from above*. Now first one begins to perceive what a dark existence it is that we have here passed through. Upwards! upwards! Heavenwards! Not darkness—no, it is becoming ever more and more light around me!"

This, no poet's rapture as it might be deemed, but spoken from the standpoint of actual experience, was one of the dying utterances of Baron Bunsen.

Many, without regard to their mortal pangs, and with no mere thought of their cessation, have whispered, as Bunsen did, "It is sweet to die!" Many others, past speech, have by their rapt gaze almost drawn that of the by-standers, as afterwards reported by eye-witnesses, to behold with them in imagination the opening beauties of the invisible world. The visionary Blake believed himself to have

seen his brother's spirit on his release clapping his hands for joy as he ascended.

Light and music and the vision of vanished faces wait at times upon the dying.

"You are passing through the dark valley," said a mother to her little one, slipping away so peacefully that she feared lest death should take her unawares. But the child would own to not so much as a shadow. "I'm in no dark valley," she said. "I see the light; it isn't dark at all."

"The very silence round her seemed
As if the angels sung,"

says Whittier in a poem on a child's death.

This notion of music in death is embodied in one of Uhland's sweet, weird little poems—

"What soft, low sounds are these I hear
That come my dreams between?
Oh! mother, look—who may it be
That plays so late at e'en?"

"I hear no voice, I see no form—
Oh, rest in slumber mild!
They'll bring no music to thee now,
My poor, my ailing child."

"It is not music of the earth
That makes my heart so light.
The angels call me with their songs—
Oh, mother dear, good-night!"*

Shakespeare, with the same fancy, makes Horatio address the dying Hamlet—

"Farewell, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!"

But not only in poets' fancies, nor in the tales of imaginative and superstitious persons is the idea to be met with. Caroline Fox notes in her Journals:

"M. A. Schimmelpenninck is gone. She said, just before her death, 'Oh, I hear such beautiful voices, and the children's are the loudest!'"

"Friends gone before," writes Young, "are pioneers, to smooth our rugged pass to death." And, to some ears, the dying never breathe words of sweeter comfort than by their calls upon, one would fain say their raptured greetings of some friend long loved and lost awhile.

"Patty—joy!" cried Hannah More, in the moment of death, reaching out her arms, relates an eye-witness, "as if catching at something"—Patty being the sister of her life-long love, who had

* "The Serenade": translated by Sir Theodore Martin.

preceded her by a little while on the last journey. "Sister! sister! sister!" called out De Quincey, almost with his last breath, "suddenly . . . and as if in great surprise," throwing out his arms as toward the little comrade of his childhood. A striking fulfilment of his own fancy, uttered years before, that the image of this beloved sister, lost when they both were children together, would mingle with the shapes that should come before his eyes in death.

Miss De Quincey, who recalls this incident, writing of the time immediately preceding it, says: "He had for hours ceased to recognise any of us, but we heard him murmur, though quite distinctly, 'My dear, dear mother!' Then I was greatly mistaken." To those who may have considered De Quincey's attitude towards his mother as the least pleasing item in a singularly attractive life, this wakening of filial affection at the last is peculiarly touching.

From De Quincey's physician, Dr. Warburton Begbie, we also have the testimony, "Often he recognised 'the footsteps of angels' and addressed words to the departed."

One has heard a shrewd old Yorkshire woman tell how her father, lying collectedly in his bed, to which he had betaken himself only within a day or two of his death, suddenly bade one of his sons stand aside, while he gazed steadfastly before him with a look of glad surprise. Then, turning round to his assembled children, "That Gentleman," he said, "drew back the curtain for a moment and letten me see inside. There was Alice, and there was Rebecca and John" (his wife and children who had died long since). "I seen them all so plain."

"And the gentleman?"

"He was Jesus," came the narrator's answer, in soft, hushed tones.

And, with that smile of perfect satisfaction on his face, the old man, it was added, passed away.

This designation of Christ as "the Gentleman," recalling Dekker's description of Him as the first true gentleman that ever breathed, is not, it may be noted, uncommon amongst a certain class of the poor, to whom "the Gentleman above," "that superior Gentleman up yonder," is a very real Personage.

As strange and sweet was the experience of a little ten-year-old boy, as told the writer by his mother. Dying very suddenly of heart-disease, he exclaimed almost at the last moment, being in full possession of his consciousness, "Oh, Ernie!"—the name of a little brother who had died some months before—"just as if he had met him in the street," said the mother. "It was such a comfort to me," she went on, "to know he had gone with his brother that I scarcely fretted after him at all—and I had fretted so terribly after the first!"

Thus occasionally, even to outward seeming, is the loneliness of death relieved and lightened.

"All natur's is in the Lord's hands, and there's no saying why He

uses this or that. Them that's strong enough to go by faith, He lets 'em, but there's no saying what He won't do for the weak ones."

The words are from Mrs. H. B. Stowe's New England idyll, "The Pearl of Orr's Island." The old nurse, Miss Roxy, is recalling the death-scene of a woman who had shrunk in uncontrollable fear from the lonely pass of death, and the saying formed her parson's comment on the experience.

"I heard her kind 'o restless," says the old woman describing in her racy vernacular her vigil with the dying, "and I went up, and I saw she was struck with death, and she looked sort o' anxious and distressed.

"'Oh, Aunt Roxy,' says she, 'it's so dark, who will go with me?' And in a minute her whole face brightened up, and says she, 'John is going with me.' And she jist gave the least little sigh and never breathed no more—she jist died as easy as a bird."

"Yes, and John died at Archangel," the listener had said.

"'Jes' so,' said Miss Roxy . . . 'he died at Archangel the very day his mother died, and jist the hour, for the Cap'n had it down in his log-book.'"

Shakespeare expresses something of this yearning for a familiar presence in the awful hour:—

"My Cousin Suffolk,
My soul shall thine keep company to Heaven;
Tarry, sweet soul, for mine, then fly abreast!"

Again, old Talbot addresses his son John before the battle:—

"Come, side by side together live and die,
And soul with soul from France to Heaven fly."

And, later on, in death, his son lying slain before him:—

"Thou antic death, which laugh'st us here to scorn,
Anon from thy insulting tyranny,
Coupled in bonds of perpetuity,
Two Talbots, winged through the lither air,
In thy despite shall 'scape mortality."

Dryden has the same thought:—

"Then, as I know thy spirit hovers near,
Under thy friendly conduct will I fly
To regions unexplored, secure to share
Thy state!"*

"We shall see——, to-morrow," was among the poet Campbell's last broken sentences, naming a long dead friend. And how cheerful the dying utterance of Gainsborough, with its hearty social ring: "We are all going to Heaven, and Vandyke is of the company."

* "Sigismonda and Guiscardo."

Some within immediate sight of death have taken as calm an outlook on the prospect as if it were a summer holiday awaiting them.

"Death has no terrors, fears, nor pains
From life to bar my way :
I go as from Siberian plains
To gardens of Cathay,"

wrote a young poet, James G. Burnett, not long ago, on the very eve of his death.

Schiller, in view of the same great change, was seized with a strong desire to visit strange lands. "As if," says Bryant, in a note to his poem on the death of Schiller, "his spirit had a presentiment of its approaching enlargement, and already longed to expatiate in a wider and more varied sphere of existence."

"How could he rest? Even then he trod
The threshold of the world unknown."

"You must just think of me as being away in Australia for some necessary purpose," said the Reverend Andrew Crichton of Glasgow to his wife, as this earthly scene was closing for him. And in gallant spirit, worthy of the noble courage which had animated her all through life, the venerable Mary Somerville wrote: "The Blue Peter has long been flying at my foremast, and now that I am in my ninety-second year, I must soon expect my signal for sailing. It is a solemn voyage, but it does not disturb my tranquillity. I trust in the infinite mercy of my Almighty Creator."

Another nonogenarian, an old man unknown to fame, wrote some years since in a letter: "The dark river has dwindled to a summer brook, so narrow that I fancy sometimes I hear the birds sing on the Other Side."

The same vision of peace broke on the delirium of General "Stonewall" Jackson, when he lay wounded to death. His mind, disturbed with the scenes of war he had just passed through, words of command kept rising to his lips. "But soon after," says a contemporary account, "a sweet smile overspread his face, and he murmured quietly, with an air of relief, 'Let us cross the river and rest under the shade of the trees.' These were his last words; and, without any expression of pain or sign of struggle, his spirit passed away."

Even as gently did Colonel Newcome, a man no less real to us than any in actual life, respond to his summons hence, as described by Thackeray in perhaps the most beautiful scene in all his writings:—

"At the usual evening hour the bell began to toll, and Thomas Newcome's hands outside the bed feebly beat time. And just as the last bell struck, a peculiar sweet smile shone over his face, and he

lifted up his head a little and quickly said, 'Adsum!' and fell back. It was the word we used at school when names were called; and lo, he, whose heart was as that of a little child, had answered to his name and stood in the presence of The Master."

Coleridge, as the mists of death were gathering around him, was visited and haunted by visions of his youth. "Is it not strange," he wrote, only a few days before the close, and after the words, "I am dying," "that very recently by-gone images and scenes of early life have stolen into my mind, like breezes blown from the spice-islands of Youth and Hope—those two realities of this phantom world! I do not add Love; for what is Love but Youth and Hope embracing, and so seen as one? I say realities . . . Yet, in a strict sense, reality is not predicable at all of aught below Heaven."

Goethe, when earthly seasons were over for him, expressed delight in the anticipation of spring.

Others besides Mrs. Hemans have been struck with surprise at the intense activity of the mind which often accompanies illness. "I could not help often wondering," she wrote, "if *any* of the thousand thoughts which swept like April lights and shadows over my spirit would accompany me into the world that is unseen."

In his "Specimens from Fuller's Writings," Charles Lamb gives the following quaintly-touching passage on Saint Monica:

"Drawing near her death, she sent most pious thoughts as harbingers to Heaven, and her soul saw a glimpse of happiness through the chinks of her sickness-broken body."

Lamb quotes in a footnote the kindred passage from Waller's perfect little poem, which serves as motto for this article. To Fuller belongs the priority of claim in the image, he having died in 1661, and Waller in 1687, at the age of eighty-two, at which age it was that he wrote the poem, standing himself upon the threshold of the new world.

It was at about the same age that Mrs. Barbauld penned her famous lines on "Life," the envy and admiration of Wordsworth, but of which the opening and concluding verses only have won their way to the popular heart:—

"Life! I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part;
And when, or how, or where we met,
I own to me's a secret yet . . .

Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear—
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
Then steal away, give little warning,

Choose thine own time;

Say not 'Good night,' but in some brighter clime

Bid me 'Good morning.'"

P. W. ROOSE,

A REMARKABLE CASE.

BY MARION F. THEED.

I.

EDWYN BARRETT, M.D.

THE brass plate that bore the inscription was polished to perfection. Day after day it shone, and had been shining for the last two years—ever since it had been put up, in fact—with the same unvarying lustre, so that one could not pass the house without noticing it; but it was wonderful how little came of the notice.

It was a good house too—on the fringe, so to say, of a good neighbourhood; and it was not without its visitors; carriage-folk some of them, as the humbler neighbours just beyond the fringe were not slow to remark. And perhaps it was this that made them keep their distance, which was a pity, as the young man whose name wooed the sunshine so persistently wanted practice as well as patients, and pence help to make pounds. And the fine callers had their own doctors—had had them for years—and even had they lost them or quarrelled with them, would have thought twice before entrusting their lives to the fair young fellow who was, to most of them, only Rhona's husband.

He should have crept in under somebody else's wing—as a junior partner—they said to each other sometimes, and added, as an afterthought, that they hoped—they were sure they hoped—for Rhona's sake he would get on. How he was to do it being—naturally—no business of theirs.

It was a pity Rhona had quarrelled with the aunt who had brought her up, and would doubtless have left her a rich woman, in order to marry him; and, though some other people were good to them, and that little Mrs. Lisle living with them must make things easier, still— At which juncture silence was apt to become more eloquent than speech.

They were not of the kind who court pity, however, and even the five-and-twenty-year-old widow, who had fallen in love with Mrs. Edwyn, and who lived with them, paying very handsomely for the privilege, had no idea how hard a struggle it really was, and what a ridiculously slender connection there was between the day-book and the ledger. The young man was always busy about something; always having scraps tossed to him, as it were, by his elders and betters in the profession; but now, at the end of two years, he could scarcely have declared with honesty that he had even begun to make a practice.

It was a mistake starting in London, he said to himself every day of his life. He had ceased to say it to Rhona, because she had no longer any need to be told it, and because, too, it was she who had advocated their doing so.

Sometimes, it is to be feared, he wished for an epidemic—for anything which would bring him into notice; so perhaps it was retributive justice that led to his being the first victim of the influenza in his own immediate neighbourhood, and one of the last to recover from it.

The baby took it too—it was a pretty baby, but fretful and delicate, and kept them both awake at night thinking and talking over their troubles, when they should have been gaining strength to bear them—and had it badly, which added to its mother's other cares an ever-present fear of its catching cold with the most direful consequences. And, needless to say, the baby entailed a nursemaid, who wheeled it out in a white perambulator, clad herself in a white gown, so that the heir to a dukedom, had they chanced to meet in the Park, might have changed places with the doctor's little son, without any apparent incongruity.

And if Rhona, on her hands and knees on the drawing-room carpet, dusting the paint and so forth, gave an involuntary thought to the nice little housemaid who had cried when she gave her notice, it was only to wish that she had met with as good a mistress as she deserved.

So long as they could hold out at all she did not mind. Edwyn was so good and so clever, the luck must turn some day! And when it did turn, then—but this she only said to herself—then she would go to Eaton Square, to Aunt Anna's, and beard the lioness in her den; for, after all, whether it were to her advantage hereafter or not, she would like to be friends.

Two years seem nothing to look back upon, especially when one has got on in life; but it is a long time in passing when one listens for every knock at the door or ring of the bell, all day long. But for little Mrs. Lisle and her friends, and the duty incumbent upon them to make the house pleasant to her, the young couple would have confided more of their misgivings to each other perhaps; or it may have been pure unselfishness that kept them silent.

But, of course, it could not go on for ever. Cut and contrive as she might, Rhona could not keep the house going upon nothing; and after a time the bills came pouring in, and the tradesmen began to dun, and it was plain enough that no polishing of the brass plate could procure them much longer credit.

Edwyn did what he could—looked up his oldest friends and explained the position to them, and how he wanted nothing but time to rise to the tip-top of his profession, and begged those who had not yet done so to come to the house and see Rhona. Some of them received him kindly and advised him to hold on, and no doubt

things would come right—they only wished they could have done anything. Others told him that, had he consulted them at first instead of last, he would never have been in his present position ; but they were all alike in the main thing—they not only sent him away empty ; they put a cross against his name for future reference.

When he came home from the last of these vain quests, with its result written for all who ran to read on that too youthful countenance of his, he found Rhona watching for him. The gas was alight already in the streets, for it was November, and cold and foggy enough for anything ; but there was no light in the library but that of the fire, which showed him his wife in her black evening dress, her white neck and arms a little bared, and the heavy gold ornaments her aunt had given her, on her coming of age, shining upon them. It struck him, distracted though he was, that she was a little more dressed than usual.

"Is there anyone coming?" he asked abruptly.

She lifted her face up to his to be kissed, whilst she pushed an easy-chair up to the fire for him.

"Yes," she said, "Major Ferrier and his sister. Jenny came to me this morning, soon after you went out, and asked me if they might come to dinner. They are leaving town to-morrow, and, Edwyn"—her eyes sought his piteously—"that is not all. You were right, after all ; you saw farther than I did. She is going to marry him."

He uttered an ejaculation in which were despair and disgust, rather than surprise.

"It is all of a piece," he said, "with everything else. We shouldn't have been able to keep her much longer, had she wished to stay ; there is that consolation," and then he told her how he had fared outside. She listened with an intent face. She had expected nothing better. She had more friends upon her side of the house than he upon his, and she appraised their friendship too correctly to dream of any such appeal to it as that he had just made.

"We have so little to turn into money," she said with a slight shudder, as she glanced round the room. "And wherever we go, we shall want furniture. When you have taken away Jenny's there is not much left, or else perhaps some one might be found to take the house as it stands."

"With the practice thrown in, eh, Rhona?" and he laughed bitterly.

"Why not?" she retorted. "You have made the beginning. The house has come to be known as a doctor's house. Surely that is something? It will not do to lose heart altogether!"

He turned his head from her, with a gesture of impatience.

"Well," he said almost roughly, "when you have found your tenant—or my successor shall I say, and paid your bills, what then? What balance do you suppose we shall have at our bankers? Good

Heavens! Rhona, has it never occurred to you what it means? That the best we have to look forward to is a paltry appointment of a hundred and fifty or two hundred a year, with possibly a couple of rooms to live in, and a child no higher than your elbow to mind the baby."

"I know," she replied bravely. "Willis would have to go, but as to minding Teddy, I should mind him myself. That is the way we ought to have begun, I suppose."

"We ought never to have begun at all," he returned, moodily. "It is all my fault. I ought never to have taken you away from your good home and all the luxuries you had been brought up to and had a right to expect——"

"Hush!" she said, interrupting him. "You are not to talk like that. I shall begin to think you are tired of me and Teddy and wish you were rid of both of us."

There was a smile in her eyes that must needs have warmed his heart, had he looked into them, but he did not. He was in that mood in which one would rather be kicked than consoled, inasmuch as one might kick back again.

"It would be the best thing that could happen to you two to be rid of me," he burst out bitterly. "Your aunt would forgive you then!"

"Edwyn!" exclaimed Rhona profoundly shocked, and just then Mrs. Lisle fluttered in, smiling and blushing, and expecting to be congratulated.

That night, after their visitors had gone, Barrett, who had to her relief exerted himself to make the dinner go off as cheerfully as possible, arriving at almost wild spirits before they separated, told his wife he had a case or two to read up, and would follow her up-stairs an hour or two later. He had done this not infrequently of late, as, though his practice did not take him abroad much, he had acquired a restlessness, born of the worry that was consuming his energies, which prevented his settling to anything before nightfall.

Rhona, therefore, though she looked at him anxiously, did not urge his retiring earlier, and contented herself with making up the fire in the consulting-room—whither so few came to consult him—and admonishing him when he did come up to come quietly, so as not to disturb Teddy. She closed the door as she went out, and as the silken rustle of her skirts died away into silence outside, Barrett moved towards it and turned the key in the lock very softly. He could not have told you himself why he did it. The whole world might have seen what he was going to be about, and found nothing unnatural in it. He had told Rhona the truth, yet it was from Rhona he was shutting himself away.

There was a dinner-wagon in one corner of the room, diverted from its original purpose for the reception of the medical weeklies which accumulated so fast. Rhona was always putting them in order and

entreating to be allowed to turn them out, but he never knew when he had done with them, and he was not one of your methodical men. He dived into the disorderly pile on which she had wasted some precious minutes earlier in the day, with a strange look on his face—a look that altered and oldened it beyond belief.

"Which was it?" he muttered. "I can't remember which week it was in."

He rummaged amongst them for some minutes, tossing them—*British Medical Journals* on this side, *Lancets* on that—before he arrived at what he wanted. Having found it, he turned to the bookshelves, where he laid his hand readily enough on a couple of volumes that bore traces of frequent reference, one on the action of poisons, the other a guide to domestic medicine—one of those books which detail the symptoms of every disease under the sun. With these at his elbow, he began to study the article, the subject of which had recurred to his mind on his return from his fruitless mission in the afternoon.

It was the account of the strange case of a man, who, after a singularly healthy existence of nearly forty years, had suddenly developed a malignant internal disease, which had carried him off within a month of the suggestion of its presence. The celebrated physician who had contributed the paper had added to his observation a reflection on the dangers to which those who were suspected of ill-feeling towards the patient would inevitably have been exposed in less enlightened days than the present. There would have been but one explanation for a death so mysterious. Another would have been added to the ever-increasing list of the victims of slow poisoning.

It may have been because Barrett had a prejudice against the writer—no more than the unreasoning prejudice of a nervous student against an uncourteous examiner—but as he read it for the first time, the thought had flashed across his mind that after all, the science of to-day was not omnipotent, and was liable to error. In this very case there had been no *post-mortem*! What if the talent that had ascribed death to natural causes had been at fault in doing so? Were not men too sure of themselves—too ready to subscribe to new theories?

How easy for a medical man, for example—a man who was clever and unscrupulous and knew what he was about—how easy for such a one to baffle the majority of his colleagues!

His own want of success was embittering him. He was not clever enough, he said to himself bitterly, to worm his way into a West-End practice, but he could have made fools of half the successful men he knew, for all that!

That was how the thought had originated. How does one thought get woven in with the others, when the mind is working incessantly; taking no rest even in sleep—on the rack, as they say? Who can tell?

Even Rhona who loved him, had not a notion what Barrett had

been suffering of late. He lacked her moral fibre and strength of mind, and he exaggerated the wrong he had done her. He was proud too, and he realised the changed life that lay before him more vividly than she did.

And there was one sentence that kept ringing in his ears, words spoken by Miss Brabazon in her drawing-room at Eaton Square and repeated to him—as such words are repeated—"If Rhona were a widow to-morrow, I would take her back; but I will never speak to the man who stole her away from me—never!"

It was past midnight before he had finished writing and comparing notes. As he put out the gas by the side of the mantelpiece, he caught sight of his own face in the glass, and was startled at its ghastliness.

"I shall not look, or need to look, much worse in a week's time!" he muttered. "No one will be any the wiser! Thank Heaven the insurance has been kept paid up, and there will be that for Rhona, even if the old woman should fail her, which she won't, and she shall promise me—I will make her promise me—to let bygones be bygones when I am gone! Who knows but that I may have plenary absolution myself, when I am booked for another world?"

The words jarred on his own ears as he uttered them, and something between a sigh and a sob burst from his lips as he turned away.

"God forgive me!" he murmured. "It is the only way. *My* life here and hereafter, if it must be, for *her* happiness, *her* prosperity! Oh, my darling, my darling!—we who might have been so happy together! To think that there is nothing left for me to do but to die for you!"

II.

WITHIN a fortnight of the announcement of Mrs. Lisle's engagement everybody belonging to Rhona's little world was talking about her and her husband. Such a fine, promising young man, people said, in dismayed voices, when they heard of his illness and the doctors' verdict upon it. And he had been going about amongst them so recently, and had never been heard to complain! Did they really mean there was no hope; and was it credible that he had diagnosed his own case so correctly that there had been no need to break the news to him? And what did they mean by an obscure internal disease? Was it merely for his wife's sake and the child's they forbore giving it its right name?

There was one drawing-room in which Rhona's face was never seen now, in which the news fell like a bomb.

"I don't believe it!" cried Miss Brabazon, in a shrill voice, in which pain predominated, in spite of herself, over incredulity. "There is not one doctor in fifty who isn't an alarmist! By-and-by they will be telling everybody what a wonderful cure it is! I don't

believe a word of it; and if I did, they would hardly expect *me* to condole with them!"

"But I assure you there can be no mistake. They have had the very best advice," pleaded the lady, who had ventured to introduce the forbidden subject, and who had stood by Rhona through thick and thin, and yet, somehow, retained her footing in Eaton Square. "The medical men are unanimous. If you could have seen Rhona, as I saw her yesterday——"

The old lady turned her eyes, which were as keen as a hawk's, on her interlocutor.

"Was it Rhona who sent you to me?" she demanded imperiously.

"She never mentioned your name," replied the other, not knowing whether to be glad or sorry that it was so.

Miss Brabazon tried to persuade herself that she was glad. Her wrong had required a great deal of nursing to keep it alive, for she was not naturally a vindictive woman, and her niece had been all the world to her. Had people been less fond of informing her how smart Mrs. Barrett's house was, and what a nice set she was in, and demonstrating her independence in other little ways, things might have come right ere this, though even to herself Aunt Anna would not have acknowledged it.

She sent her chicken *mayonnaise*, which was her favourite dish, down untasted that evening, and partly perhaps for want of a better dinner, slept scarcely at all through the night, and came down next morning, looking terribly old and haggard.

The servants who had been with her for years knew as well as she knew herself what was the matter, and old Jakes, who had fetched Rhona from Clapham Junction, when she came, at twelve years old, to live with her aunt, was watching her with piteous eyes as she stood on the carriage-step, as if uncertain whither she wished to be driven.

It was not to the Barretts' either that day or the next; but when the third morning came without word or sign, she could hold out no longer, and Jakes thanked God, as he watched the fat horses, with their heads turned the right way at last!

The old lady's thoughts were busy with many things, during the half hour which still intervened between herself and the niece who had been for the last three years so near and yet so far. Rhona had been wilful—very wilful—there was no gainsaying that, and ungrateful. There were those who held that to stand by the man of her choice did not of necessity commit her to ingratitude towards the relative, who had nothing to urge against him but his want of money.

It would have been so easy for Miss Brabazon to set him on his feet, when she saw how Rhona's happiness was bound up in him!

"Master was a little weaker—mistress saw nobody; she was nursing him herself. If the lady liked to come in, Mrs. Lisle was at home and would see her."

The old lady waved her footman on one side, and beckoned imperiously to the smart parlour-maid, as to whose future more than one of Mrs. Barrett's friends and acquaintances were already speculating. She always looked so nice, no matter at what hour one called to inquire!

"Give your mistress my card and say with my love—mind, with my love—I should like to see her."

The hand that held out the little piece of pasteboard trembled a little—it was a chilly afternoon, and old blood is apt to run sluggishly—but there was a tone of command in the voice which the girl dared not ignore, and Miss Brabazon had the satisfaction of watching her disappear into the house, leaving the door open. She had apparently been just too quick to be detained by another visitor, a gentleman who, running lightly up the steps and pausing at the top of them, turned upon the occupant of the consequential-looking carriage drawn up in front, a glance which quickened forthwith into something warmer than curiosity. She, upon her part, was not less swift in her recognition of him. Had she not introduced him at her last at Home, before she went out of town in August, as the youngest lion of the season—the youngest in more senses than one, for he could be barely thirty, this man with the bronzed face and bright eyes, whose square jaw was as eloquent of a strong will as his broad brow was of the brain to guide it, and whose slight wiry frame made it easy to credit the tales that were told of its power of endurance.

In a moment he had shaken hands and was comparing notes with her; and so it happened that when, a few moments later, the maid returned with an intimation that her mistress would be pleased to receive Miss Brabazon, it was upon his arm the old lady for the first time entered the Barretts' house.

It was not until she was seated and the door had been closed upon her, in what she rightly took for the consulting room, she awoke to the fact that her destination was not his. He had probably penetrated no farther than the hall, and that only as her escort. How much did he know of them she wondered, and how did he come to know them at all? Somehow, she had never thought of Rhona as receiving in her own house and in her own right, people whom she—Miss Brabazon—felt it a privilege to know! That he should have been a patient had a still more glaring air of improbability! Besides, he looked as though he had never wanted a doctor in his life, and he had been brought up—so some one had told her—to be one himself, before he turned his love of adventure and his singular talents to better account, and developed into the scientist and explorer that he now was. A patient indeed! Given a few patients of that sort, and the pretty rooms, about which there was an air of disuse which appealed pathetically to her, as she sat and waited, would have shown some signs of wear and tear ere this!

And presently, with no sign of hurry or excitement, Rhona came

in. She did not rush at Aunt Anna, or throw her arms round her neck, as she might have done in her girlhood, when there had been a breach between them; but there was a look of welcome in her face, nevertheless. It seemed to Miss Brabazon she had grown since she saw her last, but people do not grow after they are two-and-twenty. There was no embarrassment on her side; the lip that quivered and the eyes that filled were not hers; but she kissed her aunt affectionately, and there was nothing in her words or manner that demanded an explanation of the latter's presence there.

"I am so sorry," the old lady repeated nervously, as she meekly subsided into the arm-chair her niece had drawn forward for her. "So very sorry! But Rhona, my dear, it is not true that"—she paused to choose her words—"that you fear the worst?"

The young wife was sitting erect on a straight-backed chair facing her visitor. In her attitude there was something strangely stiff and unbending—something painfully in unison with the cold distant tone of the voice, in which she made answer; but she had this advantage over the older woman—her back was to the light and the changes that swept over her face were imperceptible.

"There is no hope, Aunt Anna," she said steadily. "We have had the best advice"—she named the three physicians, the decision of any one of whom would have been regarded as final. "They say the same thing, all of them. It may be only one week longer, it may be two, even three, according to how his strength holds out, but it is only a question of time. The disease cannot be arrested, and he can take no nourishment."

The old lady made a quaint sound with her tongue against her teeth, expressive of pity. What laughing demon reminded her companion, as she heard it, of the fate of a little blue vase long ago, in the drawing-room in the house in Eaton Square? Perhaps in her aunt's eyes that had been the greater catastrophe of the two!

"And he—your husband—does he know?"

"Yes," was the reply, "he knows."

"But he must suffer frightfully?"

The hitherto motionless figure moved uneasily.

"I try not to think of what he suffers," Rhona said in a tense voice, "and he is very good. I would not have believed anyone could be so good and so patient."

Miss Brabazon blinked. There must be something admirable, after all, in this young man, against whom she had set her face so persistently. The cry which rose to her lips almost involuntarily had a genuine ring of pain and perplexity.

"Then is there nothing I can do—nothing?" she demanded almost feverishly. "I should so like to be of some use to you, and you could take from me, you know, what you could not take from just anybody else. Rhona, my dear, you must know that my coming here could mean but the one thing; that I wished to be to you

again, and for you to be to me, what we were to each other before your marriage!"

She bent forward with an eagerness that set the spangled feathers in her bonnet dancing again, so that they dazzled the sad young eyes, whence the tears were still kept bravely back. But there was no responsive gesture on the girl's part, and when her words came, there was a chilliness in them for which Miss Brabazon was unprepared.

"I am sure you mean kindly, Aunt Anna," she said, "and I am glad, if that is really your wish, you have told me before it was too late. Because you know," and the old lady felt the intensity of the gaze she could not see, "if you had been twice as good to me as you were, and that you scarcely could have been, I could not have forgiven you. How could I, when there was no reason, not the least, that you should have taken your love away from me, because he gave me his? No, I could not have forgiven you then. But now—now, Aunt Anna, I am glad you are here, because he hoped and wished, and wanted to send for you—for my sake and the boy's!"

She rose as she spoke, and for a moment, she stood looking down on her kinswoman, not quite sure how to interpret her silence; then she stooped and kissed her on the forehead with a certain solemnity, and Miss Brabazon gave a gasp.

It was not such a reception of her overtures as she had anticipated; certainly not; but she lacked strength somehow to resent it. There were allowances to be made for Rhona, great allowances! And her husband at least had known where to look for her best friend! Aunt Anna felt more than kindly, she felt grateful to the sick man.

"I am glad he thought of me," she murmured. "You will tell him what I said to you just now, and I mean what I say—always. But, child, what about a nurse? They tell me you are nursing him yourself, which is quite right, of course; but you should have assistance. And, in illness, there are so many expenses——"

"That is all right, thank you, Aunt Anna; we have all that we require. And, as to a nurse, the greatest trouble I have is to keep people out of the room. At this moment I have a volunteer who will force me to quarrel with him before I have done, and I don't want to, for he is Ted's best friend, and he means well I know. I left him upstairs when I came down to you. You must have come in at the same time, I should think."

"What! Gavin Douglas?" exclaimed Miss Brabazon.

She could have bitten her tongue out the next moment for allowing her surprise to be so manifest, her niece turned on her so haughtily.

"Certainly!" she said emphatically. "Why not? They were fellow-students, and you should hear what he thinks of Ted and his talents! He went abroad before we were married, and he would rather Ted had not married at all—he didn't think anyone good enough for him—and there was a sort of jealousy. And then, when

he came home this summer, there seemed a fate against their meeting each other; and it was only when he returned from Scotland last week, he happened to hear——” She broke down momentarily, and then, recovering herself, added almost fiercely: “And I wish he had never heard! I would rather he had stayed away!”

“But, my dear, it must have been a pleasure to your husband!” objected Miss Brabazon.

“No, it is not!” Rhona retorted quickly. “It would have been if Mr. Douglas had been like other people. He is wonderful in many ways, but, like most men of genius, he is a little mad. And, Aunt Anna, it is too dreadful, knowing what we know, to have him coming here and insisting—yes, insisting—that the doctors are all wrong, that they are mistaken in the disease altogether, that he is the only person who really understands it, and that the case should be given up to him!”

The old lady had risen to her feet, too, by this time, for, indeed, she had stayed long enough; and the two women—the younger a little flushed, for the forced calm in which she had entrenched herself was fast giving way; the elder, her shrewd, intelligent face puckered up into an expression of intense interest—stood confronting one another.

“And what is his theory?” Miss Brabazon inquired.

A half hysterical sound, between a sob and a laugh, escaped Rhona.

“He won’t say—that is just it, Aunt Anna! And, of course, there can be no consultation—he hasn’t even taken his degree. Nobody would meet him, even if he wished it. But I suppose he has been doctoring savages out in Africa, until he thinks he knows better than any of them; and he expects me to give up my place at my husband’s bedside, for the little while we shall have together, to him!”

“I don’t see that that follows! You could nurse him as well under one doctor as another!” her aunt protested eagerly. “And, if the others have all given him up, why, Rhona, it seems to me you stand to win everything and lose nothing!”

The other shook her head.

“It is just the other way, believe me!” she said sadly. “No one knows better than Ted himself that it is all a delusion on Douglas’s part. And you have not grasped the conditions. He must have the care of him, he says, night and day, and no one must interfere so much as to give him a draught of water if he is thirsty!”

“Well,” said Miss Brabazon, “I should let him!”

The words had scarcely passed her lips when a bell—the bell of the sick-room—rang violently, and Rhona, scarcely waiting to explain that it was so and to press her lips to her aunt’s cheek, flew upstairs—leaving the old lady to make her exit as best she could.

III.

It was as Rhona had told Miss Brabazon—Gavin Douglas had been admitted almost immediately to his friend's presence. He found Barrett, as he knew he should find him, and as the servant had been instructed to inform all who might call to inquire, somewhat weaker, but still holding his own in a way that spoke volumes for his constitution. The unhappy man wished with all his heart his *physique* had been less robust. He had undergone—was still undergoing—agonies in the successful attempt to produce symptoms analogous to those of the fell disease to which he had been pronounced a victim. By-and-by he would die—or, rather, he might be said to be dying already by inches—of the starvation to which, as having attacked certain of the internal organs, it must, as a matter of course, reduce him. But when Douglas unexpectedly showed up he had begun to speculate how soon it would be absolutely safe for him to administer his own *quietus*, and so escape the worst torture of all without exciting a doubt of their infallibility in the minds of the wise men—his masters in the art of healing—whom he had duped.

There was other suffering too, to which the physical pain was, at times, as water unto wine. There were moments when he cursed his own cowardice, and would have undone his work if the undoing would have left him as he was when he commenced it; other moments there were of feverish exaltation, when he well-nigh persuaded himself that this sacrifice he was making for the beings he loved best was a grand thing, and others again wherein he railed against God for having permitted it.

That *he* was in truth what Rhona had not hesitated to call his friend, "a little mad," there is no doubt. Still, there was a method in his madness, which had withheld him from taking his own life in such a fashion as should hurt her—body or mind. The insurance people would pay up, knowing and suspecting nothing; there would no longer be the risk of her refusing the olive-branch, which he made sure would be extended to her over his death-bed; and last, but not least, she would be spared the misery of thinking of him all her life long as—— Bah! it was a hateful word. Even as he lay there, writhing in his self-inflicted torments, he would not apply it to himself.

It had been hard at first—harder than it was now, when she "bore up," as people say, so wonderfully to try and spare him pain—to think of the suffering to which he was subjecting her in the meantime; and it was not so much hard as incredibly strange to realise that in such a little while—within a given time—it would have all ceased to interest him—that he should have nothing more to do with it; that the dark days before Christmas would be the last he should see; that for him there would be no more spring or summer, autumn or winter; that he should never—for he thought

even of these things—never know the outcome of this policy—the issue of that case—in which his sympathies, like those of other men, had been enlisted.

And to think that even now, humanly speaking, his doom might be arrested—that he had but to hold his hand, and that splendid vitality of his, which was prolonging his agony, might yet, in the very teeth of death, baulk him of his prey! And if it did—what then? If the struggle had been hopeless before, what would it be now, with the world, which does not like to have its feelings harrowed for nothing, let people say what they will, laughing at him?

Suddenly, when, in the bodily weakness that was gaining upon him, his sensations were fast losing their sharp distinguishing outlines, and his thoughts seemed to lose their connection one with another, a strange *impetus* came to them from without in the person of Gavin Douglas.

There was the delight of seeing him again—a delight with which nothing in this world could have done away—but there followed upon it, as if instinctively, the fear of discovery. The eyes of love, in the head of such a man as this—how far might they not penetrate? And Gavin had given, he knew, especial attention to poisons.

As far as he could, therefore, he had been on his guard from the first, and had combated his friend's wish to come to his rescue as staunchly as Rhona herself. With those remarkable visual organs, of which Society averred to see them once was to remember them for ever, watching him night and day, there must, he well knew, be an end to his deception.

As for the young scientist, who had come back for awhile from the wilds he preferred to any civilised region within his ken, for other reasons than simply to make his mark on the London season, he was in many ways a man apart. Without being a woman-hater, he was no lover of women, and the warmest tie, perhaps not even excepting those of kindred, that had ever bound him to anyone was his attachment to Barrett. At college, and later on during the medical training, of which the more erratic of the two students had suddenly tired, they had been almost inseparable, and, absurd as it sounded, Rhona's assertion that Douglas had a sort of jealousy of her was not unfounded. It had pleased him to think that, in giving his friend the first place in his affections, he was only effecting a fair exchange. He had never reckoned upon having to "go down one" for a wife!

The circumstances in which he was, at last, destined to meet Rhona, told both for and against her. They ought, he himself felt, to appeal to all the chivalry and compassion he had in him, and he *was* sincerely sorry for her, though the fact that she was a pretty woman did not go for so much with him as with most men; but he failed to understand her composure and to give her credit for the effort it cost her. Regarding woman as the weaker vessel, and having, moreover, had

no opportunity of judging of their previous relations with each other, he could not account for that wonderful smiling calm of hers to his own satisfaction, and resented it accordingly. When the first time he saw her she fondled and played with the child at his father's bedside, he felt as though he must cry "shame!" on her, there and then. He was softened to her somewhat afterwards, when out of her husband's sight, she let the mask fall for a moment; but even after that, he could not make sure which was her real self, and so went on distrusting her.

Naturally, he did not like her or think any the better of her for the difficulties interposed between him and the diagnosis, on which he was bent. But for the doctor who was watching the case, and who was only too pleased to make his acquaintance, he would have been foiled altogether.

He could have wished now that he had been. As he left Miss Brabazon to await her niece in the consulting-room, and took his way upstairs, where the doomed man was expecting him, his heart was sick within him. It was with an effort, of which he was barely capable, he exchanged the ordinary greetings with his hostess. How long, he wondered—how long would it be possible to suspect a woman of that of which he suspected *her*, and hold his peace?

Rhona's manner, on the contrary, was rather more friendly than usual. She was glad he had come at a moment when she must otherwise have left her husband alone, and she said so.

As the door closed upon her retreating figure, and Douglas seated himself at the bedside, Barrett began to explain to him eagerly, though in a weak voice, about Miss Brabazon.

"It was not to be wondered at, I suppose," he wound up, smiling wistfully, and with the old boyish expression that cut the other man to the heart. "It was not to be wondered at that she was disappointed. A girl like that ought to have done better than take up with a poor devil like me! But it will be all right again, now. The old woman will take her back and be only too glad to get her, and the dear little chap upstairs into the bargain, and there'll be nothing else to remind them of the rough time she has had with me; for it *has* been rough, you know," he added explanatorily, "below the surface."

The face of the listener hardened perceptibly.

The one saving clause in the indictment he had drawn up in his own mind against his friend's wife was the absence of a motive. And here *was* a motive, supplied in all innocence and good faith by the victim himself.

"I saw Miss Brabazon from her carriage just now," he said, trying to speak unconcernedly; "I had met her before, at her own house, in the season. She seemed to me rather a good sort; but it is nothing—in a woman—to have the face of an angel, with the heart

of a demon; that is how they make them, as you say here! Well, whatever she is, I hope she will do the right thing by Mrs. Barrett, whether you leave her a widow or not."

The sick man turned his head away pettishly.

"We won't go into that question any more," he said, with marked irritability. "I shan't be here long, and we won't waste the time on a discussion that has no sense in it, and that is useless. You'd keep me alive, if you could, but it is not to be done. *I've* faced it, and so has the wife. What's the good of unsettling her and worrying yourself? Men like Brownrigg and Harvey don't make mistakes; or, if they do"—with an odd little laugh, which set him coughing—"they're not found out!"

"I am not so sure of that!" Douglas retorted stoutly. "Anyhow, old fellow, you have to listen to me! You are about the only human being—I don't say the only living creature, for I've four-footed friends in plenty, as you know—but you are, as I say, about the only *human* being I have any particular caring for, and I am not going to have you offered up as a sacrifice on the altar of professional etiquette or upon any other—your own pig-headedness included! I don't care *that* for your big-wigs!"—and he suited the action to the word. "I have nothing to say to them or they to me; but I happen to have had certain experience which has never fallen in their way, and it is at your service. If you don't choose to take advantage of it, or your wife, on your behalf, does not choose that you should, I tell you plainly, once for all, I shall *make* you do it!"

It was a strange threat, it must be confessed, to be addressed to a man in his own house; and, more than that, on the bed on which he was supposed to be lying for the last time, and that by his best friend; but it was not so much utter astonishment as overwhelming dismay that held Barrett silent.

Gavin having delivered himself of his *ultimatum* was staring with eyes that had no observation in them out of the windows, and gnashing his teeth, as he reflected that after all, should he be the means of prolonging his friend's life, though provide for his safety from a like attempt upon it in the future he might and would, ensure his domestic happiness he could not. It was Barrett's own fault if he forced his hand!

At that moment, in the room below him, had he but known it, Rhona was denouncing him to Miss Brabazon as "a little mad!"

"Well," he said at length, coming back to the bedside and forcing a smile, "have you made up your mind like a good fellow—to give me my own way?"

The other made a slight gesture of dissent.

"You won't, won't you? Then, look here, Ted, old boy—you *must*! If not for your own sake, for your wife's!"

Barrett smiled faintly. Not a glimmer of the significance underlying his companion's words dawned on his mind as he listened.

"Why?" he queried, in a voice that was barely audible, for he had overcome his first dismay with the reflection that Gavin's will, however strong, would scarcely dominate both his and Rhona's, and he was sick of the subject. "Why? She doesn't wish it!"

The bright hawk-like eyes were fixed upon him with an intensity that drew his own wondering gaze upward, as Douglas replied quietly, but with slow emphasis.

"Because I am as sure as that I stand here that you are suffering from the effects of an irritant poison, and that if there should be a *post-mortem*, which there will be, if you persist in your refusal to let me try and save your life, she will be the first person suspected!"

It was at this point in the conversation that recourse was had to the bell, the ringing of which hastened Miss Brabazon's adieux, and brought Rhona flying upstairs, for Gavin did not know where to look for the brandy.

"What is the matter? What have you been saying to my husband?" she demanded tremulously, and yet imperiously; but as Barrett opened his eyes and smiled reassuringly at her, she forbore to repeat her question, busying herself about him with deft hands and sweets looks, which made the other's blood boil within him.

"I've been at my old game, as he'll tell you presently," he remarked, in a tone which she resented, without knowing why—when all was said and done, was not he Ted's greatest friend?—and nothing could have sounded more cordial than the few parting words to him—"You'll think it over, old fellow! I'll drop in again after dinner," with which he made his exit.

It was late in the evening when he returned, and there was something in his general bearing and in the expression of his countenance, when he came face to face with Rhona, on the landing outside her husband's room, which showed her that he was assured of victory. She looked up at him, pale and with set lips. For a moment, a possibility that was of all possible things the most improbable flashed across his mind. Barrett could never have been so mad—or so cruel, believing her innocent!—as to tell her by the force of what argument he, Gavin, had won the day! But no! her first words re-assured him on that score.

"You have got your way, Mr. Douglas," she said in a low voice, that was pregnant with emotion. "What are you? Are you a magician that you make everyone believe you, against the evidence of their senses? Oh, if I only dared let you persuade me, as you have persuaded him, that you know more than all of them put together!"

Gavin looked at her curiously.

"I can't be a greater mystery to you than you are to me," he replied enigmatically.

He would have recalled the words, if he could, as soon as they were uttered, for to his consternation—having as great an

awkwardness in the presence of a woman's tears as most men—she burst out crying.

"For pity's sake," she sobbed, though the effort she made to control herself and refrain from noisy weeping showed she was not unmindful of the nearness of the sick-room. "For pity's sake don't persist in deceiving yourself and us with vain hopes! We had made up our minds to the worst, and you—you don't know what that is. It matters to him so little and for such a little time, but to me! Let me once cherish the least little hope that he might be spared to me, after all and in spite of all, and then lose him—I could not bear it! I should go mad, or die—or both! And you—you are so strong," she cried almost wildly, "you should be merciful!"

He was touched, in spite of himself, and greatly perplexed. For the first time, in view of such tremendous issues—the issues of life and death—his confidence in the certainty of his own conclusions was somewhat shaken. What if God's will were opposed to his?

"I hope I am not unmerciful," he said. "My one object is to save your husband's life, which is as dear to me as it is to you, and I believe I can do it. If I had believed any less than that, I should never have spoken. If there had been the least ray of hope from any other quarter which I, by my interference, should have been shutting out, I would have kept my own counsel, but as it is——" He paused expressively, and then added with quiet persuasiveness—"It is not as though I were banishing you from your rightful post at his bedside, I shall be there simply as nurse, a position for which I have been trained as you have not; and if I fail—as fail I may, for I don't pretend, Heaven knows, to be omniscient—you shall have fair warning. I am no more a thought-reader than you are, Mrs. Barrett, but should you trust me, please God you will not rue it!"

As it were involuntarily, he held out his hand to her, as if to ratify a compact made between them, but there was little, if any, returning pressure in the cold fingers he grasped with such unwonted cordiality, and she allowed him to pass by her into the bedroom, without a word.

He found the patient—his patient that was to be—propped up in bed rather higher than usual, and looking more flushed than he cared to see him.

"Well," he said, before Douglas had shut himself in, "so you've come to take me in hand, have you? You think you're a very clever fellow, and so you are; but sometimes you clever fellows overshoot the mark, and that is what you have done now. You hadn't made discoveries enough out yonder, so you must needs come and make a more wonderful one here, eh?"

The persistent incredulity—as it appeared to him on the part of the pair of them—roused the latent irritability in the other man.

"I thought you had come to your senses so far as to recognise the

fact that I had not gone clean out of mine," he observed coolly. "Perhaps you will be good enough to understand once for all, that I am not amusing myself at your expense, or your wife's," with a slight intentional emphasis, "but am very much in earnest."

"In earnest in suggesting that she might be suspected——? Good heavens!"

For a few seconds there was silence, save for the clock ticking away imperturbably on the mantelpiece; then Barrett said feebly:

"There's nothing for it I suppose but to make a clean breast of it. I'm not the first fellow by a good many, who has found it easier to face death than to go on living, with the luck against him. I can't expect you to have much patience with a coward and a hypocrite like me, but still——"

The man to whom Fate had been kind (and yet not kinder than Nature, so that aught she refused he would have wrestled hard to obtain from her) sat and listened as if in a dream, to the poor pitiful story of struggles within and without, which had culminated in despair and surely a sort of insanity. Cowardice there had been truly; that moral cowardice which could not face loss of position and *prestige*, the world's pity and contempt, the possible pinch of poverty, not for himself only, but for those whom he loved—that there had been, of course; but on the other hand, there had been courage—courage to inflict upon himself the torture of a lingering death—the dread of the wrath to come; to make, as it were, a sacrifice of himself, body and soul, on the shrine of his affections.

There were those who could and would have passed judgment upon him unflinching, no doubt; but Gavin Douglas was not one of them. He let his friend tell his story, without question or comment, and even when the latter had finished, the verdict which he awaited so eagerly, tarried.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Douglas?" he queried huskily.

"Nothing?" the other echoed, with a half laugh, quitting his seat by the fire-place and coming close up to the sick man. "Too much you mean—for you to listen to in your present state, that is to say. I have no time to waste upon preaching to you, old fellow, and I doubt whether you need to be shown the evil of your ways. A man who has done his level best to ruin his constitution is seldom allowed to forget it, and I have my work cut out for me, though I shall pull you through! Yes, God willing, I shall pull you through. But there is one thing I should like to know," and he turned his keen eyes on his friend, with an embarrassing directness. "I should like to know, in all these morbid conclusions and speculations of yours, where I came in? How you came to leave me so completely out of the reckoning?"

"I was ashamed, I suppose," Barrett said feebly. "You were such a success, and I such a failure. You can't understand!"

And Gavin did not, or did not choose to say as much.

"You know Miss Brabazon came to-day and saw your wife?" he observed abruptly. "In short, made it up with her?"

"Because I was dying," groaned Barrett. "I tell you what, Gavin, you'd better have let me alone. I'd gone through the worst of it, Heaven knows; and, if you had not turned up, a few drops of this"—and he showed the other a tiny vial concealed under his pillow—"would have done the business by this, and left Rhona free to return to the old home and the old life, and nobody any the wiser. You talk of bringing me back to life, but you don't think what the life is you are bringing me back to! Better keep your secret and my secret—both, Douglas—and let me die in peace—far better!"

"That is your opinion, is it?" queried Gavin. "Well, after I left you this afternoon, I happened to have a chat with Miss Brabazon. She saw me coming out as she was being wrapped up to her eyes in furs in that amazing old chariot of hers, and she was good enough to give me a lift as far as Queen's Gate. Your wife had let her into the secret of my madness, it appears, and she wanted to know what I meant by it, which, under the circumstances"—his face twitching a little—"I had a delicacy in telling her. So she had to be satisfied with my assurance that it was a very peculiar case, not to be explained to a lady; but that I was pretty confident there was a cure for it, and that I was coming back this evening for your decision. She had been so kind as to take me into her confidence, with respect to your relative positions, you must know, in the vain hope that I should reward her with a diagnosis of the disease."

"And what did she say?" Barrett asked eagerly.

Gavin smiled, and there was a slight inflection of pardonable triumph in his voice, as he replied:

"She said I was to tell you that to refuse to give me a fair trial would be to offend her mortally. The message was for you both, but specially to your wife. She was acquainted with her views, you see!"

Such is the true history of Barrett's remarkable illness and still more remarkable recovery, for which, it may be observed, certain eminent members of the faculty have never been able to forgive him—a want of Christian charity upon their part, which affects him less than it does the humbler individual, who was in charge of the case, and who was supine enough to allow it to be taken out of his hands.

As for Gavin Douglas, they frankly acknowledged that not all his services to science and his European reputation would have saved him from being indicted for manslaughter had anything happened to Barrett under his unprofessional care.

The brass plate, which shone so brilliantly for so long to so little purpose, sees daylight no longer. Its proprietor, however, is anything rather than one of the unemployed, and the "copy" on medical and scientific subjects that is turned out almost daily from a certain study

in Miss Brabazon's house in Eaton Square, brings in a good and increasing income.

From time to time there is a letter from some remote spot, which has not yet arrived at a position upon the most compendious of modern atlases—a letter which is exhibited and passed from hand to hand until the fragments which remain have to be withdrawn from circulation altogether. And when this happens, Rhona is apt to turn upon her husband a look that has in it both wistfulness and tenderness, as the wonder that has never quite ceased to perplex her, when she thinks of Gavin Douglas, leaps to her lips once more :

"I never can think, Ted, why, after saving your life, in spite of my obstinacy and folly in doing everything I could to prevent him, he would not rest satisfied without my saying I had forgiven him !"

And Barrett does not enlighten her. The secret of each man is safe in the keeping of the other.

NEW YEAR WISH.

MORE than bliss attained I wish you—aspiration all untired,
Though you never seem to reach the consummation you desired ;
More than love of friend and comrade—stately strength to stand
alone,
Towering like a lofty summit by the mountain breezes blown,
Learning in serenest stillness secrets of the wind and rain,
Mystery of fleeting gladness, purpose of eternal pain,
Meanings of the dawn and sunset, of the cloud's majestic form,
Of the star-bespangled spaces and the sullen sweeping storm !

ELIZABETH GIBSON.

IN THE NIGHT-WATCHES.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "IN LOTUS LAND,"
"THE ROMANCE OF SPAIN," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. W. BREWER.

H. WAS coming home from India on short leave. The R.A. could manage without him for a time. Things were quiet; war was not likely to break out at a moment's notice; all the world was at peace; his Battery would not be called into action during his absence. Yet it is the unexpected which happens; and this actually did take place.

H., then, was coming home on short leave. We determined to meet him on his arrival: be first to give him welcome. Every one knows how pleasant it is to see a friendly face on the platform as the climax to a journey of very many days and some thousands of miles. "Train with Brindisi passengers due at Charing Cross at 2 A.M. Sunday morning," was the information wired from the P. & O. chief office; and coming from the fountain-head, we supposed it reliable. Who could imagine it was trusting to a broken reed?

The hour was awkward: 2 A.M.: neither one thing nor the other. Impossible to go to bed at midnight and get up at 1.30. The only thing to be done was to keep vigil. We came up to town, took rooms at the Grand Hotel, as being contagious (as Miss Bailey would have said) to the station. Then we chanced to meet our old friend S. sauntering down Pall Mall: the "last man in town," for it was well on in August, and the House, like Eton and Harrow, had broken up, and gone off for its holiday.

"You here?" we both said in surprise. "How does this happen?"

Our own explanation was soon given. Sir Fred looked serious.

"Since H. left India things have taken rather a bad turn," he said. "I should not wonder if he arrives one day only to be recalled the next. A long journey—and dear—for a day's holiday."

The exact view we had taken of the matter for days past.

"But you, my dear Fred," we said: "why are you still in town? By-the-bye, what a fine speech, that last of yours in the House! Quite unanswerable. The Radicals gnashed their teeth, crushed to powder. But why are you still here, we ask?"

"For a very simple reason," returned Sir Fred. "I am off on Tuesday to Norway with L., salmon-fishing. We were to steam across in his yacht, but something has gone wrong with the engines, and we have taken passage in a Wilson. My nerves have been out of gear of late; sleepless nights, fits of depression; mole-hills becoming

mountains—the usual thing. So my doctor has ordered me a draught of Norway air as a remedy. The very suggestion put me half right again. With L. for a companion, his unflinching fun and humour, I shall have a good time of it. Can't you manage to throw in your fate and fortune with us? Then things would be perfect."

We gave a deep sigh of regret, for we loved Norway with a passionate love. The thing was impossible.

"Does Lady L. accompany her lord and master?" we asked.

"Oh no; women in Norway are *de trop*, though I don't wish to be ungallant. She goes up to her brother. The two are devoted to each other, you know. He declares Brae Hall is never so home-like as when she comes back to it. I don't wonder. She is the loveliest and sweetest of women: if she were my wife, Norway should go to the North Pole sooner than separate me from her. Madame la Comtesse declares she is jealous of her influence at Brae—or would be if she were less sweet."

"Are you ever going to join the rank of Benedicks, Fred? You who have ever been a devoted champion of the fair sex: who used to be all romance and poetry?"

His refined face, with its high-bred features and clear blue eyes, coloured.

"Time enough," he laughed. "As yet I have not met the perfect angel I dream of in a wife. I don't know how it is, but my heart is still whole. I am fastidious. A foot a shade too long, a nose a shade too short, a tone just above the correct modulation, and I am disenchanted for ever. Then they all bicycle in these days, or smoke cigarettes—fancy a bicycling or a smoking wife! I should commit murder—or suicide!" And he turned pale and shuddered at the bare possibility of such a jarring of domestic elements.

"But now," cried Sir Fred, "you are free; you must be free; everyone has left town. You shall come and dine with me at Black's. I don't ask, I dictate. The club's absolutely empty—we shall have a *tête-à-tête*—and the incomparable chef will give us his undivided skill. After that we will go round to my rooms, and you shall give me your opinion upon a new brand of cigars. Then at 1.30 we will quietly stroll down to Charing Cross. I should like to see H. again, and condole with him upon coming back at the wrong moment. Why, we haven't met since we were all three in Cairo in '91. By the way, do you ever hear from your great friend Osman?"

"Often," we answered. "With him, it is once a friend, always a friend. But we were peculiarly drawn together. Take him for all in all, I don't know that I ever quite met his equal."

"Present company excepted," laughed Sir Fred. "But here we are."

We turned into the club. Some three or four men, looking the objects of boredom, were lounging about; with that exception the

place was empty. Sir Fred ordered dinner for eight o'clock: choosing the most refined delicacies and purposely taxing the resources of the chef.

The great man was equal to the occasion, and when all was over, as we were alone, Sir Fred had him before him and complimented him upon his skill. He came up dressed in the height of fashion.

"Que voulez-vous, monsieur?" he replied. "It is not surprising. I began as a boy under the great, the matchless Soyer. What a man of genius was there! A proper foundation was laid. I was his favourite pupil. He told me I was responsive; had the gift within me. Cooking is a fine art, monsieur—I have the artistic temperament. Then I know how to choose my employés. At the end of two days I see whether any one has the gift or has it not. In the latter case, away they depart. 'Mon ami,' I say, 'go and paint a picture, or compose an opera, or invent a flying machine, but don't attempt things above your powers.'"

The chef was dismissed and took leave with a bow worthy of an emperor.

Presently we strolled into the Albany to Sir Fred's rooms. The new brand proved admirable: and in the easiest of easy lounges, time passed quickly. No other bachelor of our acquaintance has the art of making his rooms so comfortable.

At 1.30 we quietly strolled down to Charing Cross. The streets were deserted. Piccadilly had ceased to be Pandemonium; ceased to be the scene that nightly calls upon the London County Council and all who may be concerned in the ruling of this great city of ours. All was now quiet and in repose. It was Sunday morning.

We reached Charing Cross just before two. The whole station was apparently buried in profound slumber. Three sleepy cabs stood outside the closed doors, and when we asked a reason for keeping their present quarters, they answered that, like Mr. Micawber, they were waiting for something to turn up.

We groped about in the darkness. No, every door was locked. Then we discovered a bell, gave it a vigorous pull, and were surprised when presently a door opened in answer. A sleepy but civil official appeared in shirt-sleeves, his face lighted up to ghastly, ghostly hues by the lantern he held.

"A train is due at two o'clock with the Brindisi passengers," we said. "Why are you all shut up in this manner?"

"No train due here at 2 o'clock," replied the man. "I am in charge and you may rely upon me. None has been due or expected."

"But the information came from the head P. & O. office," we objected.

"Then the P. & O. office ought to have known better than give wrong information, sir," quickly retorted the man. "Weekdays they put on a special train; Sunday mornings they never do."

"If that be so, when are the passengers to arrive?"

"I don't know, sir. Didn't even know they were expected. Have heard nothing about it. But if you like I will telephone to London Bridge or Cannon Street, and hear what information they may have to give."

The answer soon came back.

"Passengers expected at Cannon Street 3.45. Train will not come on to Charing Cross."

"There is only one thing for it," said Sir Fred. "We must go on to Cannon Street. It shall never be said I deserted a friend in distress," he laughed.

"But you will have a whole night out of bed," we objected. "What about nerves, depressions, and expanding molehills?"

"These take flight when I'm with you," he returned. "And the walk down the Embankment in the dead of night will be so new an experience, I shouldn't wonder if Norway becomes unnecessary."

So we thanked our official, and rewarded him with largesse well earned. It opened his heart to us.

"A dark night, sirs," he said. "Wouldn't you like to borrow my lantern?"

"And go back a hundred years or so, and turn ourselves into watchmen," laughed Sir Fred. "We might call out the hour and the night in a Mendelssohnian duet; to the tune say of 'Oh would that my love.' But I fear the constabulary of London are not musical and discriminating, and we might get run in. My good friend"—to the official—"I think we had better let well alone and leave the lantern in your safe keeping."

"Then, sirs, I will wish you a good night and success at Cannon Street, and go back to my interrupted slumbers."

"You were not long in answering the bell," we said.

"Well, no, sir," returned the man. "When I heard your peal, I knew it meant business and had to be attended to. Now and then a half-hearted peal merely makes me turn on my other side, but there was a command about yours not to be mistaken. Good-night to you, sirs. Your obliged servant."

It was indeed a glorious night, and we both felt strangely elated at the prospect of our walk. Though dark, the stars shone with great splendour. The streets were empty, our footsteps alone awaking the quiet echoes. We turned into Northumberland Avenue, past sleeping hotels and closed clubs, and were soon on the Embankment.

From that moment we were in a new world, a land of enchantment. Beside us ran the silent, full-flowing river. If it never looked romantic before, it looked so now: as romantic as any river on earth, whether in Spain, Italy or any other land of Song and Sunshine. The whole scene was dreamy and poetical to the last extent, appealing strongly to the temperament of Sir Fred, and appealing to our own. Only that morning we had been moved to strong tears

listening to the Intermezzo performed by a private band with all the passionate feeling and sentiment of which violins are capable. Here was the same effect in nature. The same result produced by different means ; touching the same heart-chords, rousing the same emotion in the soul. It was fairy-land.

Presently, looking back, the river seemed full of reflections. Myriads of lighted lamps far down the Embankment, threw long rays upon the water, with a finer effect than the grandest illumination. In the darkness we traced the shadowy outlines of bridges, also lighted up, and also casting their reflections on the dark, mysterious stream.

Beyond them, also faintly loomed against the night sky, were the refined and rarely beautiful outlines of the Houses of Parliament.



Contemplating them by day or night, it is difficult to believe they are the work of the Nineteenth Century. We bow down before Pugin as a master-architect worthy to rank with those of the Middle Ages. Little credit has he received for it—for who associates Pugin with the building of the Houses—but much does he deserve.

To-night the light had ceased to shine, the flag to wave ; the interior was silent, dark and deserted as the exterior ; for the Session was over for good or bad, and the busy hive had dispersed to the four quarters of the earth. Delicate and refined and subdued, the outlines rose beyond and above the bridges. Big Ben striking the hour, his illuminated face marking the slow flight of the minutes ; behind it, the square Victoria Tower, with its graceful pinnacles ; near it, the fretted spire pointing upwards that somehow reminded

one of the spires of the Sainte-Chapelle and Notre Dame, though all are so different from each other.

But the great charm of the walk was centered upon the river itself: that mighty, dark-flowing stream; the modern Tiber; key to a city far greater than ever was Rome in her proud and glorious days.

In the darkness barges passed to and fro, their brown sails furled. They moved slowly, absolutely without noise. One saw the outline of a man at the rudder, and wondered whether he was mechanically working in his sleep. Here and there a man plied the oar, and the faintest sound reached the shore in rhythmical splashes. They might almost have been phantom barges guided by phantom men, only that now and then the bark of a dog rang out upon the air as he suddenly waked and thought of his watch.

How picturesque they were as they glided along in their stately silence, and disappeared under an arch, to be seen by us no more. What a poetical life these bargemen lead, if they only knew it. But they don't know it. And how unpoetical we should think the reality if we could spend a week amongst them, and enter into the common-places of their lives and mark their narrow thoughts and limited communications.

Yet the influences ought to be ennobling, full of greatness and grandeur. There is nothing mean and petty and sordid about the skies above them and the free winds of heaven that blow around them, and the full, silent, majestic stream that flows beneath them, widening as they pass onwards to the sea with brown sails spread to the wind, things of beauty and joys for ever. Nothing that is not elevating. They go their way, the wide expanse before them bounded by the far-off horizon—and amidst such scenes and influences they ought to be happy and they ought to be good.

"From my earliest childhood these barges have had an unknown charm for me," said Sir Fred. "In those days, my father was quartered at Rochester. It was before he came into the title, or ever expected to come into it; for as you know his elder brother had two sons, who both died of scarlet fever, poor boys: a grief that really killed my uncle, since the eight years he lived after them were years of sorrow and suffering. And we boys used to spend much of our time on those Rochester barges, sometimes arriving home like chimney-sweeps, covered in coal dust or straw; and of course getting into hot water—literally as well as figuratively. Once I remember going off in one of those barges, sailing round to Margate, and coming back in her. Fortunately Wilfred, who had gone down with me, was afraid to venture. So he went home and reported, and they knew where I was and had no anxiety about me. They happened to know the bargeman, and that I was in safe though rough hands. I shall never forget arriving home. In that short time—it was nearly a fortnight, though—I had picked up quite a Kentish twang. Of

course I lost it at the end of a few days, but I shall never forget my mother's horror at the moment."

"And your father—how did he punish you?"

"Not at all," laughed Sir Fred. "You know I was his favourite and he never did punish me. Like the King, in his eyes I could do no wrong. I wonder I didn't grow up utterly spoilt and selfish. Ah! that was thanks to a good mother."

His voice took a softer, more reverential tone as he spoke of his mother. We were leaning over the parapet of the Embankment. Below us the dark mysterious river flowed with all the weight and secrets of the centuries in its bosom. Slowly the barges were gliding out of sight. Opposite were the buildings bordering the stream:



warehouses and factories, steam mills and tall chimneys, all reflected in the dark water.

Immediately in front of us was a factory or mill brilliantly lit up. It almost looked like a furnace seven times heated. We wondered what it could be. In the dark night it stood out lurid and glowing, full of strange power. Sounds of machinery in motion came wafted across the silent river; a throb-throb: a pulsation as of a thing of life; but what work it performed we could not tell. It kept up its throb and its lurid glare in the dark night, and like the far-off lamps and the outlines of the buildings it found its reflections on the surface of the mighty Thames.

There was fascination in it; the whole surrounding influence; the myriad shadows, reflections and outlines. It must be looked upon

if the beauty and magic, the strange mystery, the poetry and romance of the scene are to be realised. Needless to say, it must touch a responsive chord in soul and mind and heart, or the true effect will be lost. You will be as those who having eyes see not. Hearing, you will not understand.

"I have never felt the influence as I do to-night," said Sir Fred. "But why? Is it because you are with me, who are as my other self? Or is it that my spirit answers to the scene as never before? I feel as if I had gone back to the age of twenty, when I was a dreamy, romantic, poetry-loving boy. I thought I had outgrown all that, and here it is upon me again, strong as ever. C., you must have mesmerised me, thrown a spell over me—and I don't want to awaken from it."

"Or is it that those cigars contain opium, or a lotus leaf, and you have unconsciously smoked yourself into dreamland?"

"No, no," he cried. "Never was wider awake, never more completely in possession of my senses: never smoked opium in my life. It is not that, but some other and more subtle influence. It is mesmerism, I tell you, and you have mesmerised me."

"We are unconscious of the power," we laughed, "though you are not the first to accuse us of it. These external influences will account for all you describe. The strange weirdness and beauty of the scene; the glorious night; the dark majestic river, with its myriad reflections and shadowy outlines; these passing barges recalling your earlier impressions. If you were not almost mesmerised by all this, you would possess a nature cold and callous instead of one full of sympathy, impressionable and responsive. In spite of writing M.P. to your name, you are I verily believe, as romantic and poetical as in the days when you left Eton for Trinity. But look there," as flames suddenly burst out from the opposite building. "What does that mean?"

In the surrounding darkness the sight was very grand. The place seemed on fire; for a moment we thought it must be on fire. It cast a lurid glare on all around; on the bridges to right and left, on the dark surface of the water; on a passing barge; outlined vividly all the neighbouring tenements. Then suddenly the flames ceased, and the building went back to its ordinary but very singular, furnace-like glow. Windows must have been opened and closed.

And then occurred the tragedy of the evening. We were fated to have a tragedy.

We were standing, absorbed in the scene and all its weird influence; wishing it would prolong itself to hours; when suddenly on the bridge to our left, there rose up, strongly outlined by this lurid glare, the figure of a woman.

Jumping on to the parapet, with arms outstretched and a despairing cry which still rings in our ears, she took, head first, a plunge into the dark waters below. The splash was distinctly heard as she disappeared beneath the surface.



Horror-stricken, our blood freezing, we were about to hasten to give the alarm, when Sir Fred placed his hand on our arm.

"It is already done, my dear C.," he said. "If she can be rescued, she will be. Look!"

As he spoke two constables mounted the parapet and looked over into the ghastly depths. It is wonderful how constantly in life help comes with the emergency. At that moment a boat shot out from the side with two men in it, and rode rapidly towards the spot where the woman had disappeared. As they neared it, a dark body rose to the surface, and before it could sink again they caught and dragged it into the boat. Then they quickly brought it alongside, and the police took it in charge.

We looked for a moment upon the face. It was that of a fair young woman, but with despair and worse than despair stamped upon its lineaments. And as we looked, those lines of Hood's with all their truth and pathos occurred to us.

"One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!
Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!"

But she was not dead, though insensible.

"It is a common enough case, sir," said a constable to us; "and touches you more than it does us men. We grow so familiar with crime, and with these unhappy cases, that really we think nothing of them. And, I would ask you, sir, if we were not hardened, if we were troubled with fine feelings, how should we do our duty? Dead, sir? No; nor near it; I can see that with half an eye. But, poor thing, perhaps she'd as lief be dead. From the look of her face, she's had a hard time of it; and likely has nothing but sorrow and suffering before her."

Then they went off with their burden, and we returned to our parapet, and our river-gazing.

Everything belonging to the late painful incident had passed away. The tramp of the men with their burden had died out. The river had returned to its calm flow; the surface was again unbroken; the opposite house with its fiery windows was still fierce and fiery. In all the air there was a solemn hush: doubly solemn in this great city. There was nothing to mark the tragedy that had been; the cry of despair that had startled the air; the soul that had tried to put an end to its human existence; flying to ills unknown; awakening—to what of horror and remorse and unavailing regret?

If anything could have made the scene on which we gazed more solemn and impressive, it was such an experience as we had gone

through. There is something so unspeakably mysterious and death-like in this dead of night, these Night-Watches in the great city; the calm flowing river with its burdens and secrets; all the crimes it has seen, the misery it has swallowed up, the tales of woe it has listened to, the wrongs it has silently avenged.

"How little we realise what goes on around us," said Sir Fred, "in this great London. The skeleton in a thousand cupboards; wrong that is done and can never be righted; unknown tragedies that take place as regularly as sunrise and sunset. But for meeting H., what should we have known or seen of this life-drama, that probably has yet to find a sadder end? You would have been down at Doris Court, sleeping amidst the whispering elms, the hooting owls, the lamb-like call of the deer: and I should have been sleeping



the sleep of the just in my room, dreaming of Norway with its rare valleys and fjords; of landing salmon as big as houses, and telegraphing to the chef at Black's to take a flying-machine and come and cook them. And all this because we happened to meet this evening in Pall Mall: for you never let me know you were coming to town, which was a neglect of the first principles of friendship."

"How could we dream you were still in Babylon? This Babylon dreadful at all times, but doubly dreadful in August. In your last letter you were going up to the Moors for the 12th. We have no Scotch second sight, though you say we mesmerise—how tell that nerves were wrong, and Norway and L. and salmon-fishing had taken the place of Brae Hall? But, in truth, one can't believe in the plea of nerves. You never looked better or seemed more yourself.

Even this tragedy we have just witnessed saw you calm and collected all through—more so than we were."

"I think it was the sudden change from romance to reality," returned Sir Fred. "I couldn't realise it. Feeling seemed half paralysed; thought suspended. Come, let us forget it. The expression of that poor face was too painful. It told its own tale. We can do no good by dwelling upon it. There are human ills and human sorrows beyond relief. We cannot set the world to rights or take it under our wing. Look, *cher ami*, once more at this great scene. Those wonderful reflections and outlines; those deeper shadows; above all, the flowing river itself, dark, impenetrable, mysterious, hurrying to the sea. We cannot grasp all the mystery and magic by which we are surrounded. Take it all in; don't forget it; this night will be remembered to my dying day. Perhaps it so affects me because it is so unexpected."

"Even now it is changing," we said. "See, Fred; the stars are paling; the sky is less impenetrable; in the East, beyond that great dome of St. Paul's, a faint dawn is breaking. Hark! Big Ben chimes a quarter-past three. The surface of the river seems more perceptible; the reflections are fainter; Fairyland is fading; good-bye to romance and magic."

"Only to give place to a different series of effects," said Sir Fred. "We shall see the gradual changing—the 'pale Eastern dawn' that Sintram talks so much about. Our night is not yet over."

It wanted but a step, or rather a turn, to plunge us from this world of romance to that of the most sober and painful reality. All down the Embankment every bench was occupied with its complement of loungers, feet out, heads back, in every attitude of discomfort and apparent prostration. Of such there are said to be nightly 40,000 in London alone.

Most of them appeared to be in the depths of destitution and degradation. In the growing dawn too many of the faces looked evil and repulsive; irreclaimable; arresting one's sympathies and shutting up one's bowels of compassion.

But some there were who looked capable of better things; whom fate and fortune not sin and crime had brought to such extremes. For these one's heart bled; one longed to take them by the hand, and raise them up, as men and brothers, and start them afresh in the race for life. If one only had the spirit of divination; could separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares; the wood that will bear carving from that which is rotten at the core.

Here and there a woman slept and slumbered amongst them, saddest sight of all; a frail creature without home or shelter; or, probably, smallest coin for an early coffee-stall.

It was a warm night, and their atmospherical sufferings were not great: but too many looked as though a plunge into the quiet river, on the way to Lethe would be, come what come might, a happy

release. They most of them seemed in the very lowest depths of misery: the virtues of the bath unknown; out at elbows, out at knees. Not a few were youths of eighteen or nineteen, for whom one felt most pity and compassion. Some probably, had not yet paid their full premium to crime and wretchedness. Given wholesome surroundings and healthy influences, and they might yet live decent and honest lives, fulfilling their just destinies. But as it was, where was their chance? They were upon the downward path, amidst the most degrading surroundings, most evil influences; their companions gaol-birds of the past or future.

After all, it is for the most part cause and effect; water finds its own level; the seeds in the heart and mind of those who find themselves here are not the seeds of wheat, but of tares. Heredity has much to do with it, and it is almost impossible to root out the evil. Badly as we want missions abroad, we need them still more at home.



The greatest heathen, the greatest misery, vice and depravity, are to be found under the shadow of our churches and within sound of Sabbath bells.

Romance and reality. Every bench was occupied; there was quite a small army of them. The patrolling constables could do nothing. But one, for some reason, went up to a youth on one of the last benches opposite the City of London School, shook him and woke him and told him to get up: not roughly or unkindly but remonstratively. At the first moment we thought perhaps it was done at the lad's request: that with daybreak some work had to be begun, and he had asked the constable to arouse him; made him, so to say, his alarm. But we were mistaken.

With some little trouble he awoke, and staggered to his feet: the uncertain motion of fatigue and somnolence. Then he reeled away for a few yards.

There was a redeeming quality in the boy's face, in spite of an unkempt head and red eyes and the pallor of want. Sir Fred spoke to him.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

The boy looked at him out of sleepy eyes. "I have nowhere to go to," he said. "Last night I had not a farthing in my pocket for a night's lodging. And in such weather as this I'd rather sleep in the open air than in those awful places, if it weren't that one wakes so stiff and sore."

"What are you? What do you do?" asked Sir Fred compassionately.

"Anything, nothing," returned the youth. "I came to London to seek work, like a fool, not knowing that without money or character I hadn't a chance. I've no one to speak for me, neither father nor mother, nor any sort of friend. I know no one here, except such people as those"—pointing to the sleeping benches with a shudder. "Six months have I been in London, and I think another six months will finish me up. I hope it will. I've only these things I stand up in, and my boots are worn out. Next week I shall have to go about with naked feet; a rogue and a vagabond. Who would have anything to do with me now?" The lad's voice was not unmusical; there was a genuine ring about it. He spoke above the average of his class.

"It seems a pitiable case," said Sir Fred, "and as far as one can see, genuine. In spite of all the downward influences, the boy has a straightforward look. It may not be too late. My lad," he said, turning to the boy, "if I took you in hand, clothed you, found you work, would you lead an honest life—try to do your duty?"

"Would I, sir?" returned the boy, the light of hope almost transforming his face. "Only try me. Take me into your service. Give me no wages, feed me on bread and water, put me in your lowest place, and I will serve you as you were never yet served, and I will give my life for you if you ask it of me."

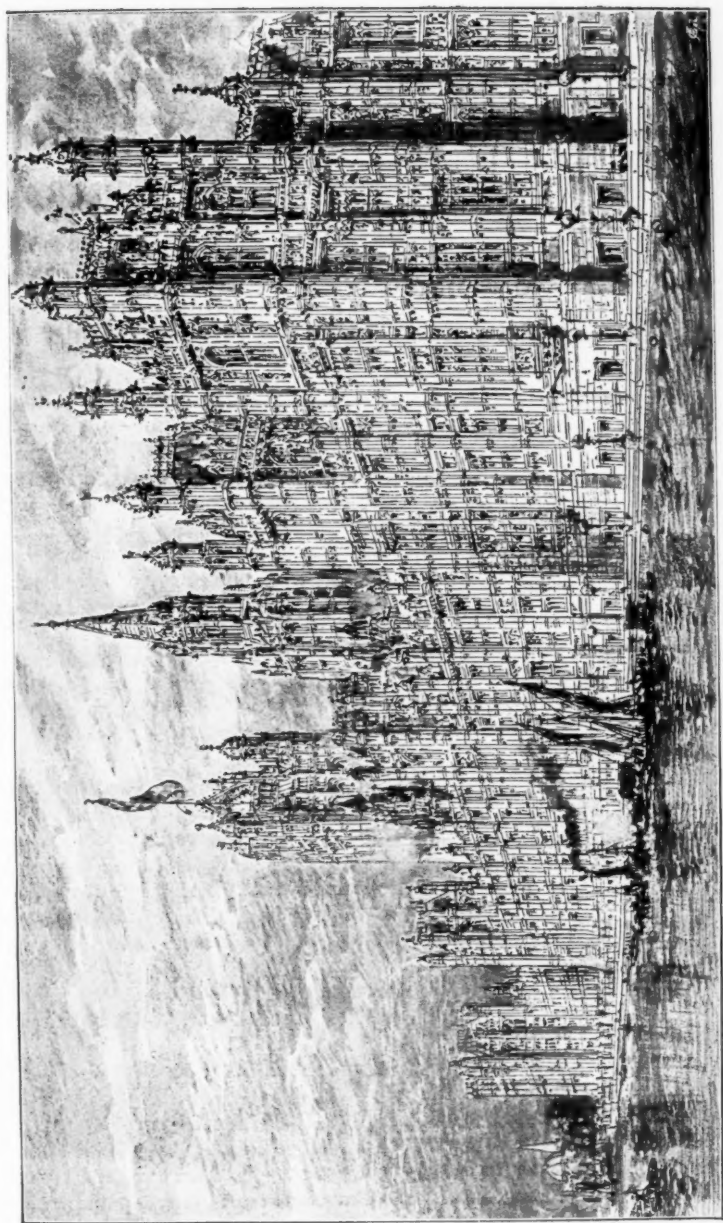
"Nay," said Sir Fred, "before I can do that, I must give you trial and training. But be true and faithful to your trial, and I promise that your troubles and privations are over."

Then writing down a few instructions and addressing them to Mr. Wheatley, who has done so much for fallen prisoners and others on the verge of falling, he gave the boy a little money, told him to get a good breakfast at the first coffee stall, and then report himself at nine o'clock to Mr. Wheatley, and deliver up the note to him.

The boy went off in his worn-out shoes, but an amount of vigour had come back to his frame; the slouch had disappeared, he had pulled himself together. Hope had returned to him.

"I have an idea that this is a genuine case and will turn out a success," said Sir Fred.

And it has done so. The boy was put to work, went through



three months of training and discipline, and in the smart, well-dressed young footman that opens the door to you when you call, it would be very difficult to recognise our waif of that summer night. Wholesome influence has transformed him; good food and a happy life have raised his nature, physically and mentally; his gratitude and affection towards his master are unbounded; and, in his own words, it is hardly to be doubted that if the necessity arose he would lay down his life for him.

But this, alas, is an exceptional case: too often such an experiment would end in failure. As we have said, water has a way of finding its own level; and for the most part it is not excess of good qualities that brings people down to the lowest stratum of society. Yet one success such as this is worth the discouragement of a thousand failures.

But this is anticipating: we must go back to our night-walk, the cause and origin of it all.

The day had well broken in the East, when we passed away from the river and the Embankment, for which we felt a new-born and very strong attraction. We looked back from the bridge, and all down the stream reflections were dying out; that fiery furnace of a house was paling before the dawn; bridges were no longer shadowy outlines but substantial realities; it was fairyland no more. And yet the wonderful building beyond all, rising like lace-work with its towers and pinnacles, was worthy of any land of magic, as we saw it in all its repose and grandeur, standing out against the early morning sky, from which the stars were fading. But the minute hand of the great clock warned us that we had almost reached the limits of our time.

"Our walk has been a dream," said Sir Fred. "Full of wonders and marvels; of domestic dramas and tragedies. If we could always insure the same results, I should not care how often we repeated the experience—that unfortunate's attempted suicide excepted. I wonder how she is going on? Whether consciousness has returned to her, and with it the weight and woe of her errand? In this instance, I fear, we could do nothing; it is beyond us. There should be a Council of women to deal tenderly with these cases. Their reward would be great in a multitude of instances."

"You should bring it forward in the House," we returned, fixing our gaze upon its enchanting outlines, and listening to the chimes that rang out 3.30.

"No," replied Sir Fred; "that task must fall upon some one else. I cannot pose as a philanthropist. It may be a weakness, but the good I do must be done in secret. You alone are my confessor. Our tastes agree; we happen to be of one mind, have the same aspirations. I have no wish for the confidence of the world at large, and it will never receive mine. But come: or the 3.45 train will arrive, and we shall not be there after all to receive H."

Down Queen Victoria Street we went in the pale morning light. We had it all to ourselves, excepting here and there a solitary policeman, who touched his hat as a sign that he saw we were neither birds of prey nor of ill omen. Somehow we slightly missed our way and found ourselves at the solid and substantial Mansion House, where not long ago we had seen all the glorious pageantry that marked the sixtieth year of a still more glorious reign. Down Walbrook we went, passed St. Stephen's, that desecrated church that was once so beautiful with its ancient oak, and is now so ruined and hideous in its restored (save the mark!) condition. The first time we went in after the demolition we shed tears of sorrow and regret. It is hard that Goths and Vandals should destroy the treasures of past ages and put bitter for sweet.

A few more steps onwards, and there rose up before us the great building of Cannon Street Station. As we approached it, who should dash up in a hansom but Mrs. Carlton.

"*You* here!" she exclaimed, just as we had exclaimed earlier in the afternoon. "And *you*, Sir Fred! Wonders will never cease. I thought of you both as hundreds of miles away. You must be the last men left in London."

"I think we are," laughed Sir Fred. "We are now here to meet H. who is coming home from India on short leave. But, if I may ask, what brings *you* here at this unearthly hour, and unescorted?"

"*Need* you ask?" returned Mrs. Carlton. "The same mission that has brought yourselves. My husband is also coming home on leave. I have not seen him for three years, for you know I have been too ill to join him out there. As for escort, I would have none. Hugh will be sufficient escort—when we meet."

The love-light was in her eyes; she could not hide it, good woman and devoted wife as she was. The meeting would be a supreme moment for both: all our eyes and ears should be given to H. We told her so. She laughed.

"I don't mind you," she replied. "And I am very sedate. When I feel most, I show least. Still waters run deep. It is one of the rules without an exception."

"Yet strong feeling must show itself in some way," we objected. "If you always appear cold you will at last be thought cold. And it is useless having a balance at your banker's if you never draw cheques upon it."

Again Mrs. Carlton laughed. She agreed, but she was silent.

We all went on to the platform. At the far end the signal boxes stood out against the morning sky. Many skeleton arms were stretched out, but one was down: the train was signalled. Mrs. Carlton turned pale; we distinctly saw her tremble. Subdued and undemonstrative she might be—to those who did not see below the surface.

At five minutes to four, a train was seen slowly coming round the

curve. Mrs. Carlton grasped a bench, uttered the faintest of cries. Very subdued and undemonstrative indeed!

"Good-bye," we said. "We leave you—all our eyes and ears for H., as we said before."

It is doubtful if she heard. Her spirit had gone out to that advancing train, freighted for her with all that was most precious in life.

It came up. Doors opened; there was at once a small bustle and excitement. We heard a cry of "Hugh!" and saw two people clasped in each other's arms. Husband and wife had met after long parting. We turned away, and Mrs. Carlton's words rang in our ears. "When I feel most, I show least!" Sir Fred smiled.

"That is what I like," he said. "'Semper fidelis.' Could I find the same, I would join the Benedicks. But, my dear C., marriage is an utter lottery."

"True," we answered; "but where is H.?"

Half a dozen passengers had alighted, and H. was not amongst them.

"He may be coming on by a later train," said Sir Fred. "This is evidently only the advance guard of the passengers. Or he may be staying a day in Paris by way of rest and looking up old acquaintances."

Whatever the cause, he was not there, and we both felt disappointed. Our little plot, like the greater Gunpowder Plot, had fallen through. We were not to be the first to welcome him. For we could gain no information as to the next train. No one knew anything about it. And having met with two failures, we would not attempt a third.

As we turned to depart, a hansom was preparing to depart also.

A servant followed behind in a four-wheeler with the luggage. Two radiant faces were inside the hansom. Major Carlton caught sight of us.

"Why—why—" he cried; "surely—surely—it can't be *you*! And yet—it is. Eleanor, my darling—don't you see them?"

"I was with them before the train came in," laughed Mrs. Carlton, looking ten years younger and a century happier. "But where's H.?" she asked.

"He hasn't turned up,"

"H.?" cried the Major. "Oh, he's stopping a day in Paris; declared it was necessary for his health. Coming on to-morrow. Wire to the Hôtel Bristol what time he means to arrive."

Then they went off, and felt they were in paradise. We followed more leisurely—outside the celestial gates.

"Let us walk back," said Sir Fred. "But this time we will take Fleet Street and the Strand. We must not spoil that Embankment effect by repetition."

Strange and startling the contrast between day and night in this city of London: the death-like silence and desertion succeeding to that almost appalling, ever moving throng and bustle: a contrast yet

delightful. Nothing more pleasurable, nothing more suggestive of repose, of death itself, than a midnight walk through the city. It must be gone through to be understood.

This morning it was not midnight, but past four. The Morning



Watch had begun, nothing had awakened. Not a cab was to be seen, not a solitary human being, a stray policeman excepted. We had it to ourselves.

Nothing could equal the beauty of the early light. We passed up Cannon Street, and where the houses parted, suddenly came

in view of St. Paul's, its magnificent dome crowned by the golden ball and the golden cross. Never had it looked so splendid, so effective. This wonderful light threw over it a glamour of romance and refinement, such as it can never wear in the garish hours of day. It stood out against the morning sky, a holy and sacred temple, worthy its destiny. Never had the genius of Wren shone out with such brilliant effect. Never had we been so impressed. It seemed, that great dome, with its golden cross rising into the sky, less an earthly, than a heavenly vision.

We both stood looking upon it with an amount of veneration never before bestowed upon St. Paul's, for, whatever the grandeur of its exterior, it resembles within a heathen rather than a Christian temple.

And it seemed to both of us that there are two worlds, separate and distinct from each other as light from darkness; that period of the morning before sunrise, and for a short time after; and the full garish light of the later hours. The one full of romance, repose and refinement; suggesting another world, another life; under whose influence everything is changed and glorified: the other too well known to need description. In the one the angels are hovering; one almost sees them, feels their presence, hears the rustle of their wings; in the other they have gone back to paradise, and the world is poorer, and more prosaic, and more commonplace, and less holy and beautiful, for their absence.

So we felt as we turned from the vision, and knew by a subtle change in earth and sky and atmosphere, that the sun had now risen.

We went our way down Ludgate Hill, and through Fleet Street; talked of Dr. Johnson, his post-touching fancies, his mighty powers of work and conversation; his capacity for making and keeping friendships. Talked of the Piozzi-Thrale days and interludes; the days of hoops and paint and patches, minuets and awkward teacups. The Griffin glared at us outside the Law Courts; a hideous goblin that made us regret the days of old Temple Bar sacred to our boyhood.

On through the Strand, through all the wonderful light of early morning, no creature crossing our path, no sound disturbing the tranquil air. And still the light was wonderful; all about us there seemed a Sabbath feeling; a sound of bells, strange harmonies.

At Trafalgar Square we parted, Sir Fred going back to the Albany, we to the Grand. We agreed to meet again at ten o'clock, and breakfast together in his rooms.

"What an experience it has been," he cried. "It seems an age since we dined at Black's, had the chef before us and complimented him upon his genius. We have lost one object of our walk, but found another. Let us hope it may have done some good. I have never gone through such a night. And yet, tragedy apart, how simple and natural have been the elements making up a wonderful

picture. But, C., I believe you are partly at the bottom of it all. In some way or other, I tell you that you mesmerise me: and when with you I feel as though I had eaten the lotus flower and fall into dreams and visions."

"At least," we returned laughing, "admit that you are all the better for them. As you said just now, we have the same aspirations. It is something to have kept to our high ideals, for the world does its best to shatter them. There are few St. Cecilians on earth to draw angels down. A rivederci, amico mio. At ten o'clock we meet again."

So each went his separate way.

In a few moments we were in our room, gazing out upon the great square. Nelson was looking down upon us from his column, in all the glory of sword and cocked hat; and as we looked back at him, his lips seemed to move, and there came down through the air the last words he ever uttered on earth: "God and my country."

And when our turn comes, reader, if we have taken that motto for our guide, you and I, it will bring with it no repentance and no regret.

LETHE.

THE student dreamed in dreary dead of night—
A mortal man who drew the common air—
But he had turned from earthly things and fair
To follow wisdom as a sacred right
Of the immortal. In his fervent thought
He questioned of the ancient world, and sought
How fountains of the solemn deep and springs
From holy skies destroyed all living things.
He asked of knowledge secrets of the earth—
How gems and gold and wealth of roots had birth;
The reason for the winds and seas' laments—
The operations of the elements;
The seasons' change, the circuits of the years,
Positions of the stars—the good, the ill,
The mystery of human hopes and fears,
Things manifest and things inscrutable—
Depths of still deserts where no foot hath trod—
Dim mirrors of the infinite ways of God.

But then, as time passed on, there came to him
The cup that in the darkness where we live—
Cup bitter-sweet and filled full to the brim,
Flower-crowned and deep—one hand alone can give:
And he who thought the course of worlds to trace
Fell blind with gazing on a woman's face.

To him no more pale moons revolving told
 The story of the lamps that burned of old
 From dark to day. The moaning of the sea
 Recalled no more the roll of destiny;
 For who would sound the depths of things below—
 The chances, changes, tangled joy and woe,
 And strange dark mysteries of worlds above—
 May play with passion—but he does not love!

Beside the student burned a lamp enwrought
 With strange devices of an earlier day.
 Through long still nights the solemn shining ray
 Had coloured all the problems of his thought;
 But it was darkening now—had paled too soon—
 And only ghastly gleam of silvery moon
 Lingered among the letters of a name
 His idle hand had traced. "Die out," he said,
 "Bright flame of wisdom, stifled by regret!
 I ask no more—for knowledge dulled and dead,
 For truth, for light—I ask but to forget!"

His head upon his hand, there floated by
 Vague whispers—*Go, poor faithless mortal! Go
 Where swiftly waters of oblivion flow,
 And cast away the scroll of memory!*
 He rose and took the name he loved, and stood
 Beside that awful and mysterious flood
 Where Lethe's waves in solemn silence glide.
 He saw pale formless phantoms faintly gleam
 Like wandering flames upon the rushing tide,
 And heard the clang of funeral bell that tolls
 In cold monotony for parting souls.
 The scroll he held half touched the sombre wave.
 "This is the death," he cried—"this is the grave!
 And shall I still thank God for passing things—
 For summer suns, for sweet returning springs,
 For songs of birds, for perfumed breath of flowers,
 For all the calm delights of evening hours,
 And not for love?"

In heaven a little star
 Rose through the midnight clouds, so fair, so far.
 Upon his lifted head the radiance fell,
 Ceased rushing wave and clang of funeral bell;
 The dark hours passed, and with the sweet new day
 Mists rose from sunlit paths and stole away.

C. E. MEETKERKE.



TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS.

A TRUE STORY.

BY LINDON MEADOWS.

I.

THERE lived about a hundred years ago, in one of our large and populous English cities, an old man named David Gannett. It would have been abundantly evident to any one who paused to contemplate the white hair and whiskers of old David, together with the stiffness of his decayed stock and the erect manner in which he bore himself, that a considerable portion of his chequered career had been passed in the army—or, at all events, that he had seen service in one of those valiant “trained bands” which found a harmless vent for the martial spirit of the age.

And this was indeed the case. David, when but a mere stripling, having misconducted himself in some way, had decamped from his native town, accepted the King's shilling, and embarked with his regiment for the West Indies. Here, after he had served some years, David had the misfortune to be nearly carried off by an attack of yellow fever, which resulted in his being invalidated and sent home. Soon afterwards his regiment returned also, and, as a sudden change from one climate to another is always viewed by the War Office as an improving thing to the constitution, it was then ordered out to Canada, where poor Gannett got just as miserably nipped by the cold as he had before been scorched by the heat.

But while on duty in Canada he had the luck to be severely wounded in one of his legs by the bursting of a cannon—the luck, I say; for homeward he came again, with an honourable discharge from the army, and a pension calculated to render him comfortable for life.

So David now amused himself, and added to his quarterly pittance by stuffing birds, mending umbrellas, grinding scissors, setting razors, and, in fact, turning his hand to anything that was likely to fill up a leisure moment creditably, and enable him to toss an occasional honest penny into the apron of his poor decrepit old wife.

One day, however, as David was carrying back to its owner a corpulent blue gingham which he had been fitting with a new spring, his eye chanced to light upon a huge placard on the wall headed, “The Great Lottery,” and urging people to go and pay their money in quickly, as the tickets were nearly all disposed of, and the books would shortly be closed.

David's heart began to beat. He read further, and saw that by

investing the trifling sum of twenty pounds—though that was all he possessed in the world—he stood a chance of winning twenty thousand. He took off his spectacles instantly, put them back into his pocket, delivered the blue umbrella, and returning as quickly as possible home went to hold a consultation with Dame Phoebe. Dame Phoebe was dreadfully deaf, so he had to bawl with all his might into her ear.

"Very wet indeed," said Phoebe. "Oh, yes."

"I didn't say it was wet," cried David. "No such thing; there hasn't been a drop of rain all day—the stones are quite dry."

"Oh!" said Phoebe, holding her hands to the fire. "Ah—well, well."

"There's going to be a lottery."

Phoebe looked at the umbrella-mender. She hadn't heard one word he said, but didn't like to tell him so. She merely nodded slowly, and looked again at the fire.

"Did you catch that?" asked David.

"Cold, is it? I thought so—ah!"

"I didn't say it was cold!" roared David. "On the contrary, it's quite hot."

"Hot? Oh, I see," returned Phoebe. "Yes, yes—it *is* hot!"—and she warmed her hands once more.

David drew back and gave his wife just such a look as he once bestowed upon a Tuscarora warrior, whom he had occasion to thump upon the head with the butt-end of his musket.

"I said there was going to be a *lottery*!" roared David. "Here! it is no use, I see; give me the slate"—and he wrote down the words. Phoebe understood now, and her looks asked, "Well, what then?" David next wrote, "For twenty pounds one may buy a ticket that will win as many thousands."

"Ay, but you haven't *got* twenty pounds, lad," was the reply.

"No, but *you* have, and that's the same thing, isn't it?"

Phoebe returned no answer for a minute, and then mildly remarked that that was quite another thing. David bestowed upon her a second vicious glance, and hastily scrawled, "Not if I am determined to buy this ticket, I suppose."

"Twenty pounds are twenty pounds," said Phoebe, shaking her head. "It's all we have in the world besides the pension. Take my advice, David Gannett, and don't be a fool."

"Think of winning twenty thousand golden guineas!" scribbled the umbrella-mender. "What a heap! what a hoard! We might hide in it—roll in it!"

Phoebe looked doubtful; she was giving way. "Go and hear what Anthony von Poootherchick has to say about it," was her reply.

David snatched the slate from her hand and wrote, "Why should I consult Anthony von Poootherchick in a matter like this? He knows nothing about lotteries; he never put into one in his life."

"No, I am sure of that; you can't do better than consult Anthony; go at once."

"Well, as you will," said David, seizing a dilapidated old hat, "but it won't have much weight, I can tell you. An old soldier is a match for fifty Von Pootherchicks, any day."

David Gannett walked straight up to the lathe at which Anthony von Pootherchick was presiding. Before the old umbrella mender had stood near it ten seconds, his hat and shoulders were covered with fine chips. He looked like a man who had just weathered a heavy snow-storm. The lathe made such a noise that Anthony did not perceive David's entrance, and the latter had to touch the old philosopher on the shoulder to engage his attention. Then he desisted from his turning, and greeted his neighbour with the air of one who had wished him well, and was quite at his service.

"I want your advice," bellowed David in his ear.

"Hush, man—I'm not deaf!" mildly observed Anthony von Pootherchick. "What do you bawl at me in that way for?"

"Oh, I forgot," said David. "To be sure—how stupid; well, you have heard, I suppose, of this great lottery?"

"Oh, yes, I have heard of it, neighbour—and what then?"

"Would you advise me——"

"There, you are raising your voice again!" cried Anthony von Pootherchick, rather irritated. "I told you before that I was not deaf."

"No, no, I beg your pardon," said David, scratching his ear in an embarrassed way. "I *always* forget; it's with talking to old Phoebe. But about this lottery."

"Well, about this lottery," said Anthony, taking up a gouge and beginning to set it.

"You put in twenty guineas—or pounds—I don't remember which—and win twenty thousand. Wouldn't you recommend me to try it?"

"On those conditions, yes, by all means."

"Thank you, Anthony, I knew that was what you would say, and very sensible too, but Phoebe wouldn't listen."

"Stay a bit," said Anthony, examining the gouge's edge; "let me understand you rightly. By putting in twenty pounds you say you can't fail in taking out as many thousands?"

"I didn't say '*Can't fail*.'"

"Oh, there is a doubt existing, eh? There are chances against you, then?"

"Yes, very likely, but——"

"How many, pray?"

"I don't know; I didn't inquire."

"Nor need you," gravely returned Anthony von Pootherchick, pouring a drop or two of oil upon the stone from a little tin vessel with a spout like a snipe's beak. "You are a poor man, David Gannett, like myself, and can't afford to make ducks and drakes of a

sum like twenty pounds. You may *win*, it is true, but that you would *lose* is much more likely. You came to ask my advice—and you have it.”

“Thank you,” said David, in a dogged tone, and returned homeward to combat the objections of Dame Phœbe.

II

DAVID GANNETT was a long time in bringing his more cautious wife over to his own way of thinking, and inducing her to countenance his ambitious projects; but he harped so much upon the chances of success, and used so many skilful arguments to convince her that the step he was about to take was one of the most prudent ones in the world, that she at length entered fully into his views, and became even more enthusiastic in the matter than the old umbrella mender himself. As a convincing proof, too, of her sincerity, she went secretly upstairs to a garret, and thrusting her hand up the chimney, brought out an old crumpled black stocking, from which she drew upwards of twenty pounds in bank notes; and then, coming down again, put them cheerfully into the hand of David, who without delay paid the money in at the lottery office, and received in return a ticket—the title-deed to his enormous wealth! Dame Phœbe had told him to choose something with a seven in it, so he chose the number seventy-seven, which, through some fortunate oversight on the part of speculators in general, had up to the present moment remained unappropriated.

“When is the drawing to take place?” asked Phœbe.

“On Tuesday week,” replied David, with the assistance of the slate.

“Tuesday week! I don’t like that; it will fall on the first of April!”

“That’s the very reason why they chose it,” returned David, rubbing his hands. “Don’t you see how many fools they make?”

“Ah,” replied his wife, “take care that they don’t make a fool of *you*!”

Just then Anthony von Pootherchick arrived. The visit was purely one of kindness. He wished to prevent David from speculating in the great lottery.

“But it’s already done!” cried David. “See!”—and he drew the ticket from his pocket.

Anthony surveyed it contemptuously.

“Do you remember the old proverb?” he asked.

“No. What is it, neighbour?” said David, as he clapped a brass ferrule upon the walking-stick of a testy elderly gentleman.

“‘Fools and their money are soon parted.’” And, having suffered his indignation to vent itself thus, Anthony von Pootherchick walked composedly out.

"What's that he said?" eagerly asked dame Phoebe, relinquishing the bellows and putting her hand to her ear.

"That we're sure to win the great prize," replied David Gannett, making a hideous noise with his file, and communicating a last polish to the ferrule by means of a little piece of sand-paper.

"We must have a complete turn-out from top to bottom," he added, at he stirred up his tea that evening. "These old tables and chairs, and that old Dutch clock, won't suit *our* altered circumstances. I'll have an arm-chair with a red cushion to it, and a round mahogany table with a lion's head carved on each leg, and a respectable clock with a handsome face, and the moon rising over it; and I'll have an elegant looking-glass over the mantelpiece, and a new carpet on the floor, and beautiful curtains round the window. No more mending umbrellas and stuffing birds after that—I shall have enough to do to stuff myself. And as for grinding scissors——" He gave the rickety machine a kick as he spoke, which precipitated it noisily into a corner.

A week rolled away; the important day arrived. David, under the careful inspection and superintendence of his wife, dressed himself in his very best, brushed his dinged hat, drew on a pair of discoloured gloves, and stood prepared to start.

"Stay a bit!" cried old Phoebe. "Take off that yellow neckerchief, and put on the one with the spots."

David did as he was desired, and, seizing the slate, gave Phoebe the following directions, which she promised scrupulously to obey.

"If things go as I expect they will, I shall not walk home, mark you; I shall ride in a *sedan chair*. Watch for me at a top window, and when you see the sedan chair turning the corner, you will know that I am coming. Then throw up the window instantly, and bundle all our old furniture that you can lay your hands on, into the street! Spare nothing—out with it, dame! You understand, do you? Very well; so now good-bye till I return." And, kissing his wife gallantly, away went David Gannett, already in imagination the possessor of an amount of wealth which baffled the powers of arithmetic!

III.

DAVID GANNETT, the old soldier, marched away at a double-quick step into the town. He was in wonderful spirits; he felt like a man who had inhaled laughing-gas. His head and thoughts were in the clouds, and as he tramped along the resounding footway he brought the end of his iron-tipped stick down upon it with an energy that struck fire from the stones, and left an absolute tail of sparks behind him. He soon arrived at the large building in which the lottery was to take place. A dense crowd of people had collected here. Hope and eager expectation sat on every face. Mirth and laughter resounded

from the walls. Nobody looked sad, for nobody was yet a loser by the great lottery.

"What are they laughing at, I wonder?" muttered David Gannett to himself. "Do they *all* expect to win?"—and for a moment the possibility of a failure on his own part occurred to him. He grew chill from top to toe at the bare thought of it, but roused himself, and anxiously awaited the opening of the proceedings. He did not wait long. A boy in a blue dress (David observed that he was blindfold, and had one hand tied behind him) dipped his naked arm into a revolving box, drew out a ticket, and handed it to a clerk, who called its number, upon which a second boy, on the opposite side of the room, drew from *his* box a ticket also, and handed it to another clerk, who cried "Blank!" The same ceremony was repeated twenty times, and then a prize of two hundred and fifty pounds turned up. The announcement of this success was hailed with an immediate cheer, and the hand of the fortunate individual was shaken by his friends, while those whose tickets had been pronounced blank took the opportunity of slipping quietly away, with faces as blank as their tickets.

Blank, blank, blank, blank, blank, blank—fifty times in succession, and then a prize of five hundred pounds.

"Come, that's worth having," said David; "five hundred pounds is a good round sum, but after all, it's a mere trifle to what *I* expect to get. Ah, what did I hear? Yes," cried David aloud, "that's *my* number, gentlemen, if you please. *I* am number seventy-seven."

"Blank!" was the reply, and poor David Gannett fell down flat upon his face. He had fainted from nervous excitement. His case provoked much commiseration, but he was rather in the way, so the chief clerk of the lottery office referred to his books, and finding the umbrella-mender's name and address, issued an order for him to be conveyed safely home. David Gannett's house, however, happening to lie at some distance, and a disengaged coach not being procurable just then, they put him carefully into a sedan chair, which some humane person proffered for the occasion, and away the two bearers trudged with their load.

Dame Phœbe, like a wary sentinel, had been looking out for upwards of an hour. The better to fulfil her engagement. With the assistance of a neighbour she had collected the whole of the household effects into one room—a garret—and was now patiently awaiting the appearance of the sedan chair. At length, as she was on the point of giving way to despair, she saw the long-looked-for sedan turn the appointed corner. In an instant up went the window, and down toppled the furniture in a perfect avalanche upon the pavement below, chairs, tables, beds, looking-glasses, wash-hand-basins, warming pan, fire-irons, and fenders, down they went, bump, bump, bump, crash, crash, crash. The fiery elderly gentleman, who brought the walking stick to have a knob put to it, chanced to be passing at the

moment, and he looked angrily up to see from whence this shower of missiles came ; but the nozzle of a pair of kitchen bellows hit him over the eye, and while he lay sprawling, a large water-jug falling upon the centre of his back, nearly broke the spine. A yellow-whiskered cheesemonger, rushed from his shop at the next door, and held up his hand deprecatingly to dame Phoebe, but the corner of a wash-hand-stand took his chin, and hurled him to a distance of several yards. A corpulent chemist, from the opposite side of the street, rushed over with the view of stopping the outrage, but a large heap of druggut falling at the moment, like a prophet's mantle, enveloped him in its folds, and he was utterly extinguished.

And all this time, and in the midst of all this confusion, there was David Gannett, who had just recovered his senses, looking out at the sedan window, and calling at the very top of his voice, and making signals to the deaf Phoebe to suspend further demonstrations of joy. But Phoebe was in too high a paroxysm of bliss to attend to anything that was going on below, and it was not till David Gannett himself had rushed wildly up the stairs and actually seized her by the two wrists, that she could be got to comprehend the umbrella mender's meaning, and desist from the work of destruction. Then the dismal truth flashed upon her, and together the unfortunate pair sat down to bewail the ruin their own imprudence had brought upon them.

While they were thus weighed to the earth, and in the midst of their grief and despondency that excellent man Anthony von Pootherchick, having heard of this couple's misfortune, had the consideration to pay them a visit. He was not one of those provoking, though perhaps well-intending, people, who, when your prospects have miscarried, shrug their shoulders, and cry, "I told you so," and wonder why you didn't follow their advice. He said nothing at all ; he merely looked round him, saw how matters stood, and going quietly away, headed a subscription which in a few days amounted to nearly forty pounds, and quite set up David Gannett in business again.

As for the old umbrella mender and his wife, be sure they did not invest any more money in lotteries, but continued to live comfortably on what little they possessed, till death gave them something better. David often afterwards acknowledged that his lottery speculation was a stupid business ; and in order that the recollection of it might act as a check upon him in future, he bought a half-pint china cup, with a handsome picture of the "Dog and his shadow" emblazoned upon the front of it ; and this always during the old soldier's lifetime stood upon his mantelpiece. At his demise it fell into the hands of Anthony von Pootherchick ; and when *he* died it passed into mine ; but unfortunately, it got stolen from among my curiosities two or three years ago by somebody who had taken a great fancy to it ; so that I am denied the gratification of inviting the reader to an early inspection of so valuable a relic, or of causing a neat illustration of it to accompany the present veracious history.

THE CHURCHWARDEN'S HASSOCK.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT JEM MORRIS TOLD THE CAPTAIN.

THE campaign was over, as far as the Captain was concerned, and very little, it seemed to him, had he gained by it. All his hopes of happiness had depended on the reputation to be acquired by gallantry in the field, or skill and resolution in dangerous enterprise. He had done what he could—that he admitted to himself in his most despondent musings, but an accident and fever combined had stopped his career midway; and now there was nothing for it, but returning home, no better off than he went, only much the worse for wear.

And Emily would be as far beyond reach as ever!

Well, the journey to the coast was over too—that was one comfort. It had seemed as if it took a year, in spite of all the friendly care of his comrades and men. The West African seaport, where he was waiting for the steamer, had appeared, on first arriving, a haven of delicious rest. Even as he reclined in the verandah, and felt something like a cool breeze, there was a comparative sensation of comfort, and he said as much to his doctor. It was necessary to assume a little cheerfulness, for that functionary had a discontented, half reproachful look in his face when contemplating his patient that afternoon.

"Hang it all, Acton!" he said at last, "it is no use pretending to me. Is there nothing, nobody in the world for which, or for whom it is worth while to get better? Pull yourself together, man, and show a little pluck, if the climate has not sucked it all out of you. A dozen wounded men under fire would not be half so disheartening as a fellow who won't even try for a more decent pulse than that."

The Captain smiled lazily. "I would pull with all my heart, if I had anything to lay hold of; and as to shaking, I have had my allowance of that already. Don't be savage, I shall be all right in time; or, if not, it doesn't much matter."

"Of course it doesn't. There's nothing left for a man of your age to do or care about. Quite so. Follow my directions, will you be so good? I don't mean to give in so easily, whatever my friends may do."

"Poor fellow!" was the doctor's inward comment, as he turned away, "there is something keeping him low besides the fever. He must be watched, and if possible amused."

And so it was, that two of the invalided men, who were in better condition than their mates, were told off to keep watch over Captain Acton that afternoon, and privately exhorted to cheer him up. "You,

Morris—I have known you to tell no end of stories, half of them lies, of course, but not the less interesting. Can't you think of anything you have seen or done that will help the Captain to forget himself for half an hour?"

Jem Morris saluted, and thought he might; but the patient at first seemed inclined to doze; and the two watchers stationed themselves where they could hear any movement or call, and fell to talking in loud murmurs, not of the heat, or the climate, or the insects, or the campaign; but of home, of hayfields, English books and English woods. And as Jem Morris, the chief talker, unconsciously raised his voice, words mingled with the patient's dreams, and the Captain, from listening unconsciously, half raised himself to be certain he had heard aright. The movement brought Morris to his side.

"Want anything, sir?"

"No—yes, I do, though. I suppose you and Hanbury do not talk secrets in the open air; anyhow, I caught a name I knew, and should like to hear a little more."

"No offence, I hope, sir?" The soldier's face had somewhat deepened in colour, and he hesitated before speaking.

"No offence whatever. Anything about friends at a distance is interesting. I heard only a scrap of your story. Should you mind telling it over again?"

"Not if you care to hear it, sir. I'll just tell Hanbury he may come back in half an hour." He dismissed his willing comrades, and returned with a look in his face, half shy, half serious, that the Captain had never seen before.

"The truth is," he said, when he had obeyed the sign to make himself comfortable by the side of the couch, "I have never told the whole story to any one, and I am not sure you will care to have me about you when you have heard it."

Captain Acton looked at him kindly.

"I have heard queer stories enough since I entered the service, Jem; but I do not think any one was sorry for having told them."

"Just so, sir," was the eager reply, "and if you'll believe it, I was very near telling you mine that time I was in the hospital, and you were so good in coming to see me. Never in my life did I long so to let it all out; but I missed my chance, and you were ordered to the front just after."

"It is something on your mind then? Let us have it out before you miss your chance again. If it is anything you are sorry for, that is one step to getting it remedied, and we will look out for another."

Reginald Acton could say this with confidence, for no officer was more trusted by his men. Though he never courted popularity by evading unpleasant duty, he possessed the rare gift of sympathy, which went straight to their hearts. They all knew he cared for them, and even the worst in the ranks thought more of a look from

the Captain, than of any speech from any one else. Jem Morris had been won from their first acquaintance, and when doubtful of his own recovery, the desire to confide his secret into such honoured keeping, had been enough to revive him from time to time, as it had done now. It would carry out the doctor's suggestion, and relieve his own mind before his courage failed again. The Captain looked brighter already, as he arranged himself to listen, and his first remark showed his real interest.

"Was I dreaming, Jem, or did I hear you say you had been in Mr. Ridley's service?"

"I did say so, sir. Might that be the name you knew, sir?"

"I know something of him, and—and of his family."

"Beg pardon, sir, but were you ever at Ridley Hall, down at Welvedon?"

"No, I met the family in London. How long is it since you were there?"

"Just fifteen years, sir. I was only a boy in buttons, you see. There'll have been many changes since my time. You don't happen to know if the old butler is there still—Mr. Trueman?"

"Poor old Trueman? To be sure he is, and will be to the end. They say it would just break his heart to leave, and he has always some one in attendance to do his work."

"Just so, sir. That was my duty when he was all those years younger. He won't have grown much handier meanwhile. And the two young ladies, sir—they were in the school then; they'll have grown up beautiful by this time."

"There is only one at home now. The eldest has married a clergyman."

"Miss Mabel, sir? Then it is Miss Emily left with the Squire. She was always good to me, sweet little lady that she was; it was all along of her, my grandmother said, that I was put into buttons instead of learning a trade."

"What has your grandmother to do with your story?"

"Only this, sir; that she had been own maid to the Squire's mother, and I was left on her hands with no one else to care for me."

"I see; and Miss Emily, you say——"

"Miss Emily would have me sent to the Hall to be a page. She always got her way, sooner or later, did Miss Emily."

"I am glad to hear it, and only hope she always will. Now, go ahead with your secret, man, or we shall have the doctor coming back before I have heard it. Is it your buttons or your grandmother that weighs on your conscience most?"

There could be no doubt that the Captain was interested now. Jem Morris, who had been tentatively feeling his way, started with fresh spirit.

"As you will understand, sir, having seen him, it was Mr. Trueman as I was mostly under. He was cripply with hands and

feet, but though I did most of his work, it was always under his eye, and supposed to be his doing. He had a notion that it would be a downright liberty to have the gout the same as his master—it was a lively time for everybody when the Squire was took bad—and he always stood out that his was rheumatism. He didn't care what the doctor called it; rheumatism was good enough for the like of him.

"I dare say, sir, I gave him plenty of trouble, for I was soon tired of my jacket and buttons, and of trotting about at his heels, sometimes with more to do than I could well manage, with him looking on and always wanting me to do it in some other way; and sometimes with nothing to do but watch him pottering over one thing and another. What I liked best was waiting on the young ladies in the garden or the grounds; carrying their watering-pots, or rowing them in the boat, or teaching them to fish, which they were very keen about, though I do not think they ever caught anything. To hear Miss Emily laugh when her hook was tangled in a tree was like listening to the larks on a bright morning. You have heard her laugh, sir? I thought so.

"Well, in a place like that you'd say a fellow ought to be happy and contented. But there was one thing I never could get used to, and that was the Squire's temper. You never knew when you were safe. All might be looking as smooth as your hat one minute, and the next it would be hailing and pelting about your ears till you couldn't tell which was you and which was your neighbour. May be you never came in for it, sir, being a gentleman; but I have seen even Miss Emily looked scared, and she his special pet. Ah, you have seen something of it, sir? Then I need say no more: only this in fairness, that when he thought he had been unjust, he never rested till he had made it up somehow.

"One winter's day some gentlemen came to the Hall on business and were shut up with the Squire in the library; and when they were all at luncheon, Mr. Trueman and I went in to seek the fire. No one ever meddled with that room unless he were by, and making up the fire was quite a business—for all the world like a bit of drill, with the stirring and the sweeping and the putting on of one coal at a time, exactly in the right place. The Squire's writing-table was strewn with papers and parchments, some lying loose, some tied up in packets; and an iron box was on a chair with more of them. I says to Mr. Trueman, 'Are we to tidy up all that?' for the Squire was mighty particular about things being in their places. You'd have thought, sir, I had fired a shot into his waistcoat, for he dropped into the nearest chair panting for breath. 'Tidy up *that*, boy?' he gasped out, as if I had proposed cutting some one's throat, 'it's as much as my place is worth to lay a finger on one of them. Those are *law papers*, James,' he says, 'and worth nobody knows what, only master would rather lose a basketful of his old plate, I can tell you, than the smallest scrap on that table.' And then, while I was putting

the bits of coal on as he pointed them out, he went on to tell me how, in a family where he was second footman, a paper had once been missed out of a lot like this, and the whole house was turned upside down, and a hundred pounds reward offered, and would have been paid too, only the gentleman luckily found it where he had put it himself, tucked into the envelope of another. But another gentleman he had heard of was not so fortunate. He offered nigh upon a thousand for what was missing, but it never turned up, and a good bit of property changed hands.

"The dining-room bell rang while he was speaking. The Squire could not bear to see him stand at luncheon, and always sent him away, but if more wine was wanted, he had to go, and he told me to stay where I was till he came back. On no account was I to meddle with the fire. So, having nothing to do, I strolled up to the table, just for a look at them precious papers scattered about. My head was full of what I had just heard, and I could not help thinking what fun it would be if one of them should be missing, and the house all in commotion, with a grand turn out, and myself, perhaps, having the good luck to find it somewhere, and pocket a hundred pounds. I should be a rich man (as I thought then), for the rest of my life, and all for a bit of folded paper or yellow parchment, that you wouldn't care to have if it was offered you! What, thinks I, could make them worth so much. They were nothing to look at, when all was said and done. Mr. Trueman had told me once, how, when he was my age, he had been took to see the Bank of England, and how a pleasant-looking gentleman put a parcel of banknotes in his hand, and told him he could now say he had once laid hold of a million of money. Suppose I had one of those papers in my fist—what would that be worth, I wondered—and like a young idiot that I was, what must I do but take up one, and kept it in my hand, just to feel what it was like. And at that very moment, I heard the roar of the Squire's voice—I never knew what it was about—coming along the passage, and knew he would be upon me in a second, and I made one bolt for the inner door that opened into the passage near the butler's room, dashed up the back stairs, and into my own attic, without being seen by anybody.

"It was all like a flash of lightning, sir—and there was I with that dreadful thing in my hand!

"What was I to do? I could no more venture to confess than I could understand what I had carried off. If it had only been Mr. Trueman, I could have stood it, but to be took up before the Squire was too awful. I must wait, and see what came of it; and, for a little while, I must own the notion of the to-do that would soon begin was rather pleasant. You see, sir, it wasn't the fault of the Hall if we got dull sometimes; but we did want something to stir us up, and this would be a bit of a change for everybody, if I kept my own counsel. Meanwhile, I must hide this thing; and what a job *that*

was, no one can tell. I had no lock-up place of my own; the maids turned over my drawers and cupboard when they pleased, which they called tidying them; and anything they found lying about they just swept away without by your leave. It was not safe in my pocket; and how to hide it on my person was a puzzle, till I remembered a piece of flannel the housekeeper had given me for my chest, which, till then, I had shirked wearing. Now it came in handy. I wrapped the thing in it—luckily it was not too stiff to be folded—and as she had carefully sewn strings on it I tied them round my neck. Then, with my jacket buttoned over all, I felt I could safely show my face once more. For, by this time I was every minute expecting the uproar to begin.

"Would you believe it, sir, it never began at all. Nobody seemed to miss the brute of a thing that I was hating with all my heart. I don't know what would have been done if they had. But, when you expect a shell to go off at your very feet, and you don't hear even a fizz of ginger-pop, why, all your notions get into the wrong places. Night after night I dreamed the hunt was beginning and I was going to be found out, and I used to wake in the dark all of a shake and shove my hand under my pillow to make sure the flannel was there, with the thing inside, and wish I had had sense enough to let it alone.

"I had fancied to myself, more than once, how I might pretend to find it behind some books in the library, or in one of the big portfolios of prints that stood in the rack near the bookshelves; and how, when I had been praised and rewarded, and everybody put in good humour, I would screw up my courage to tell the truth. But, when no reward was offered, and nobody knew what had happened, that plan wouldn't wash. I tried once to get Mr. Trueman talking about missing papers; but he shut me up pretty sharp, and seemed to think it wasn't safe to speak of them at a distance. So matters went on for some weeks, and I was so sick and tired of wearing the thing, especially when the weather got milder, that I was nearly desperate enough to jump into the pond and leave it there—only I could not make up my mind to its being lost.

"It so happened that the housekeeper, who was always kind to me and liked me all the better for wearing her bit of flannel, wanted my help one day in her room about some book-shelves, and was called away in the middle of the job. 'Sit down a bit till I come back, James,' she says. 'You may look at any of those books that you like as you are careful.' For I always liked a book when I could get it, and the young ladies lent me many a one that I've often thought of since. Well, I turned them over, and came on an old one called 'The Velvet Cushion' that I had not seen before, and was very near not looking into then, only I saw something that made me think it was a sort of a Guy Fawkes business.

"The papers just then, you know, sir, were full of explosive stories;

and, as I was a fair reader as boys go, I had to read them to the maids. Next to a murder, there was nothing fetched them like an explosion.

"Well, this little book began about a good old Vicar finding a queer change in his pulpit cushion; from being soft and easy, it was stiff and hard. So he takes it home to his wife, rips it open, and finds, not a ton of dynamite, but a roll of paper, on which was the cushion's history. I didn't care about the cushion one button, and I was pushing away the book, when it came into my head that, what had been done once might be done again. Could I, by hook or by crook, get the thing into the pulpit cushion? The man in the book put his secret, on purpose, where it would be found out; mine had to be hid till it was wanted. I thought I would have a peep into the church the first opportunity, and it came sooner than I expected.

"The very next morning—it was a Saturday—I was sent with a note to our Vicar. A hale old gentleman he was, and the kindest in the world. And when he saw me at his door, he spoke so hearty-like, as if he was one's friend, that for a minute, sir, I felt I could tell him everything. How often I have wished that I had! But before I had got the words on my lips, he said in his quick way, 'Jem, your legs are younger than mine. Go into the vestry—the church is open—you will find Mrs. Goodridge at work. Tell her I want to speak to her for a minute.' And he went into his study, and my chance was gone.

"I did get a peep at the pulpit, and saw at once, what I might have remembered, that the cushion was a big affair, with thick trimming, and I don't know what all; nobody but a regular workman could have tackled it for a moment. But in the vestry I found Mrs. Goodridge busy about two or three hassocks. She was the butcher's wife, and he was one of the churchwardens; and as she had been in the upholstery line before she married, she always had the church mending, and mighty proud, the people used to say, she was of it, too.

"My message didn't please her at all. It was just like a man, even the best of 'em—to think one could put down a job of this sort, just when it was all pinned and ready, and go off about something else. She was sure it was only some shiftless body wanting rent or coals, because the money had been wasted in muddling, and she must see about it to tell her husband. Go she couldn't and wouldn't, anyhow, till she had finished putting in her pins. And then I saw that she was covering a big hassock with a piece of red carpeting, and had the edges cleverly joined together ready to be sewn, and finished off with cord. As she explained, this was her husband's hassock, and being the Vicar's churchwarden, it was right and proper that extra trouble should be taken about it. The others had been patched up and mended, and would do a little longer. She stuck in

her last pin while she was talking, and ordering me out before her went to see what the Vicar wanted.

"I marched out as she bade me, but I was back again pretty quick, for she never thought of locking the door. Such a chance was not to be missed, but I had to be careful in pulling out the pins, or I should not have got them in again. It took me longer than I liked to make an opening, and I had to get out my knife and cut into the flock and stuffing of the cushion before I could stow away the package, flannel and all, that was worrying my neck. How I got the pins back into their places I don't know, but I remember that by the time it was done, I was as hot as I have ever been since in Africa, and panting as if I had run a race.

"But I had got rid of the horrid thing, and that was such a relief that by the time I got back to the Hall, I was whistling for joy.

"On Sunday morning I walked to church behind the young ladies, carrying their books, and sat on a bench a little way off to be ready when they went out. From my place I had a good view of the churchwarden's seat, and very little that day did I hear of service or sermon. There was the hassock, with its brand-new cover, and so far all was safe; but he had a tender foot, and his Sunday boots were not so easy as they might have been, and it seemed to me that he was never still one moment—he was always fidgeting and poking that hassock as if he was sure there was something inside—and I began to wonder if his wife had had time to stitch it all up, or had trusted to her pins; and suppose anything gave way? You may laugh, sir, and I could laugh too if I didn't somehow feel the sickening sort of fright come over me as I tell the tale.

"I have read in some story of a man who murdered his little nephew, and buried him in his garden; and how he would dream that the turf would not cover the body. First a hand, then a foot would come up, making him jump out of bed and run to look out of the window. My dreams that night were much of the same kind as that gentleman's. I was always seeing the hassock coming undone, and trying to stick in the pins, which wouldn't hold, or seeing a bit of the flannel peep through the seam, and expecting somebody to say that it was mine; and I must have been a little off my head, for the housekeeper took me in hand, and wouldn't let me get up. And when I was able to do that, I was not allowed to work, but was petted and cosseted as if I had been her grandson. And the young ladies came to see how I was, and brought me books and papers, and were so kind with their pretty ways. I broke down at last, and cried out of sheer misery. The more I cried, the kinder they all were, thinking it was along of my feeling so ill; so the next thing was——"

"You ran away," suggested the Captain, as Morris paused. "Yes, I quite understand the situation. If you could not confess the truth, you could not confess the petting. Have you ever heard whether that document was missed?"

"Never, sir. I knocked about for some time, till I fell in with a cousin, who was a band-master, and he got me taken on as bugler, and I have been in the service ever since. He found out that my grandmother was dead, but he kept my counsel, suspecting, I fancy, that the less said about me the better. So there's my story, sir; and as I said before, when I thought I was going to lose my number in hospital, I longed to make a clean breast of it to you. There's the gun, sir! The steamer must be in. Shall I go and see after your letters?"

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPTAIN CONTINUES THE STORY.

I was inclined at first to make light of the whole thing, and to account for the document, whatever it might be, not being missed by the simple fact that it was of no particular value. But on thinking it well over, and comparing my friend's experience with my own, my opinion changed. Ridiculous as it all sounded, the matter might be serious, and if so, might throw some light on what had perplexed me before.

That my Emily's father, gout or no gout, had an irritable temper, I could not deny; nor that a boy in buttons might well lose his head and his courage at the prospect of coming in contact with it. Personally, I saw nothing of it myself, up to a given time. On my return home from the Indian campaign, in which I had been lucky enough to see some stiff service, and get a little to the front, I was introduced by a mutual friend to him and his daughters in London, and found them delightful. I met them often, and was always kindly received; and when Miss Ridley married, I was one of the guests. The wedding was from a relation's house in town—there was illness in their own neighbourhood at the time.

It was at that wedding—in which the bride, charming and friendly as I always found her, was nowhere compared with her chief bride's-maid—that Emily and I came to an understanding, and our troubles began. When we next met, and I suggested speaking to her father at once, she owned, with marked distress, that he had not been like himself the last day or two, so irritable, without any apparent cause, that she feared he was either unwell, or had met with some worry in his affairs. In either case, my suit was in danger of a bad reception. Of course, it was right to be open with him, and he was always kind and good at heart; but when he was like this, there was no knowing what he might do or say. She only trusted to me not to be impatient with him, and not to take offence. I justified this trust in the most unpleasant hour of my life (exams. included). Mr. Ridley was always too much of a gentleman to be rude, but something had hardened him that day, and I could win no concession. Until I had means to

give his daughter the position she had always enjoyed, he would not consent to an engagement. A word was dropped about difficulties and agricultural depression, but as by a second thought, he turned that aside; and as I would not fail Emily, I accepted my dismissal almost in silence. The summons to my regiment followed shortly, and I did not see him again. Now that I recall that trying scene, which I had so often endeavoured to forget, the idea would suggest itself—might not Jem's story throw some light on the old man's state of mind? Who could tell what the absence of a deed, or part of a deed, whatever it was, might involve? There was a touch of the ludicrous in the notion of the hassock hunt; and it would never do to suggest it without being sure of the state of the case; but a longing to be on the track had already seized me, and my doctor, who appeared at the same time as my letters was more relieved I fancy, than he chose to admit, by the change in my condition. I startled him presently—not a little—by sitting bolt upright, and asking how soon I could start for England. A glance at the letter I thrust into his hand, however, was quite enough. It was from a friendly man of business, announcing that I had come in for a handsome legacy, bequeathed by a wealthy city gentleman, who had been my father's closest friend, in recognition of my gallantry in India. I had only known him slightly, and never expected a sixpence, and the instantaneous perception that my way to Emily was made smooth was almost more than my weak head could safely endure. However, good news has a pleasant way of making itself at home, and when the next steamer started, I was on board, with Jem Morris engaged as my servant. Like myself, he had got his discharge as unfit for service; but in spite of his own bodily suffering, he proved to be a capital nurse, and I do not know how I should have pulled through without him. More than once I doubted if I should ever see the shore, but hope and love fought hard, and Jem did his best by stoutly refusing to go near any of the family, unless I went with him. Miss Emily here, Miss Emily there, he couldn't face the Squire without me, and he didn't mean to.

We got to London at last. I saw my kindly lawyer, found my affairs going on velvet, reported myself in the proper quarters, and had a more pleasant reception there than from the great surgeon I was persuaded to consult. The Horse Guards might be complimentary as to the past, but medical science was very decided about the future. I might be patched up for domestic life, but active service was over, as I already knew.

On inquiring among friends after the Ridley family, I learned that when the old Vicar of Welvedon died, the Squire presented Mabel's husband to the living, and to her I resolved should be my first application. It was a fine September afternoon when we reached the *Fox and Grapes* at Welvedon, and the kind landlady gave me all the information in her power. Yes; the Squire was at the Hall, and

had been out shooting, but he saw little company now. There used to be a houseful in September, and she did not think more than three had been there this time. Miss Emily, she was always with him; but he had put down one carriage, and sold some of his horses. Oh, yes; there had been changes, sure enough, and some liked them and some did not. The new vicar, Mr. Wingfield, as married Miss Ridley, he was a pleasant-spoken gentleman out of the parish, and very out-spoken in it, and, for her part, she liked that best; but there would always be some as found fault, if you was Archbishop of Canterbury. Or on that very account I might have suggested, but at that moment, Jem Morris, who had been out to reconnoitre, came in with a face so full of bad news, that the gentleman who drew Priam's curtain at dead of night was a joke to him. I got rid of the good hostess, as soon as it could be done with civility, and then asked what was the matter. Matter? I might well ask what was the matter? He had been to the church, found it open—which it didn't use to be—took a good look round to see about the hassocks, and—would I believe it?—there was ne'er a one in the place. A lot of flat things hanging on pegs; not a decent cushion for your head or your heels to be had for love or money.

The poor fellow had so confidently relied on finding things just as he remembered them, that his courage seemed to have quite collapsed, and I had to assume more than I felt. Of course changes were to be expected, and if this was the new vicar's doing, the only thing to do was to go and see him and his wife at once. And to the Vicarage we went, Jem walking behind me, with a dejected droop of the head, very unlike the plucky fellow I had seen under fire. He had hoped to find the thing before his story was told. I have no doubt the prospect of facing "Miss Mabel" made him feel as if he had on his page's buttons again, and but for my presence, he might have repeated the page's flight. As I went before, he followed, as he would have done to his death.

Nothing could be more cordial than my welcome—Mabel had always been charming, and married life seemed to have added to her charm. Her husband I knew to be as good a fellow as ever lived, and the reception they both gave me was flattering to my hopes, though no doubt it was partly owing to my shattered condition. When I presented Jem Morris, with due mention of his gallant services, he had no cause to be dissatisfied with his share.

"Of course, I remember him," said Mrs. Wingfield, "and the fright he gave us—going off like that, after being so ill! Poor old Trueman talks of it to this day! Well, our loss has evidently been the country's gain, and you are both come back such heroes; it is an honour to receive you! Just arrived from London? How good of you to come straight to us! I have heaps of things to ask you. Here comes Elizabeth with the tea. Elizabeth, will you take care of Mr. Morris, and make him as comfortable as you can? The last thing I

knew of him was that he ran away; and people have been running away from him ever since—so he deserves the best you can give him."

I saw Jem's face brighten as he followed the pleasant-faced parlour-maid, and I knew he would be more at his ease out of our presence. In Mabel's eager eyes I could read that she had much to tell me, but was expecting me to ask for it. But the excitement of her spirits for some little time gave me no chance. I must have tea, and sit in the easiest chair, to be supplied with all the good things on the china-plates, and a dozen questions were put about my voyage and health and what not, till at last Herbert Wingfield, who had listened with an amused smile, interposed with the remark that I might have a question or two to ask in my turn.

"Well, yes," I said; "I have a very serious question to ask, which, I believe, nobody but yourselves can answer."

They looked at each other, and Mabel became suspiciously grave.

"A serious question? But why ask it of us?"

"Because nobody else, I suppose, can tell me what you have done with your church hassocks."

Whatever Mabel had expected it was not this, and her amazement was so genuine that neither Herbert nor I could help laughing, though he was as puzzled as she was.

"Don't mistake me," I put in at once. "I have no opinions connected with church arrangements. I am only awfully disappointed that all your hassocks are gone. Where are they?"

"Those wretched old hassocks! They were a perfect disgrace! The first thing we did was to clear them away. A broker took them at a valuation—and very little he gave. He advertised that they were wanted for the Colonies. I cannot say it speaks well for Colonial sense of what is fitting, but if they prefer such things——"

I suppose my face betrayed me, for Wingfield again interposed.

"We do not know that they are gone there yet, my dear. Don't look so down-hearted. Acton, our churchwarden, will know where to find the broker, if the matter is really serious. I thought for a moment"—with a smile—"that it was a bet."

"I wish it were!" I exclaimed from my heart. "I would pay more than I ever staked in my life to lay my hand on one particular hassock out of the lot. But for fear you should think my brain-pan has got damaged as well as my bones, I had better tell you the whole story."

In fewer words than Jem had used, I gave them his confession. Again I saw them look at each other, though neither spoke till I had finished, perhaps because Herbert's eye kept Mabel quiet. When I paused, he observed, in his deliberate way, that I had thrown a light on what had perplexed them all—the depression of the good Squire's spirits. He had never been the same since their marriage, and he and his lawyer had certainly overhauled his papers then. "My

churchwarden," he continued, "is gone up to London, and will not be back till late. As soon as I can catch him, we will wire to the broker. There is just a chance that a reward may do something, even if we keep the Colonies waiting."

With this we had to content ourselves, agreeing that nothing should be said to the Squire at present; and then I ventured on the question that had been burning on my lips. Should I be welcome if I went to the Hall.

Mabel thought it would depend on dear papa's mood at the moment, of which no one could be sure. Should she take the pony-carriage and go there to reconnoitre?

"Take the pony-carriage by all means, my dear," said Herbert, "but take this poor fellow with you. He is accustomed to carry difficult posts by not being afraid of them. Never mind Morris. I have some enquiries to make, and, if anything turns up, I'll bring him to give his evidence."

So it was settled, and I was soon being whirled along the road by my hostess, who, to prevent my heart failing me, I suppose, talked of all sorts of things in the parish and of it, of which I have not the smallest recollection. Somewhere between the lodge and the house, we overtook Emily herself; and after that I only remember that I got down to walk with her, and Mabel, flourishing her whip, dashed on, as she said, to clear the ground for us.

There are some things one cannot talk or write about, and this walk is one of them. I do not know how long it took us to reach the Hall, but allowance must be made for a disabled soldier—at least, so Herbert said afterwards. Perhaps this had something to do with my reception, for the Squire came to meet us in the hall, and held out both his hands for mine. Indeed, he insisted on giving me his sturdy old arm, as he conducted me into his library—the scene of Jem's unlucky performance. It was all I could do to avoid being enthroned in his well-worn arm-chair; but I could not escape the glass of old port, which he insisted on my emptying before I said another word.

I had not said many, for his kindness somehow choked my utterance. The ladies had judiciously left us together, and by degrees I was able to let him understand, what he already understood without my help, that I had come back in the same mind as to his daughter. One thing was new to him, at any rate—that, though my military career was ended, I had a sufficient income, I hoped, to ensure her reasonable comfort. All I asked now was his consent to our being happy, and his forgiveness if I had had the misfortune to offend him. He put his hand in mine by way of answer.

"You have been open and honest with me, my boy," he said, "and I will keep nothing from you. I know how you have behaved, and that you deserve the best girl in England, which Emily is. Aye, aye—we know all that"—as I was eagerly assenting—"but there is

something else you do not know. I am in an awful mess, Acton—worried out of my life about my affairs; and till I see my way, I can attend to nothing else. I have kept it to myself as long as I could—my son is on duty abroad"—I knew that George Ridley had a diplomatic appointment—"and it is no use talking of business to women; they only understand how to cash a cheque.

"This estate, as perhaps you know, is entailed, and George will come in for it, such as the times will allow it to be. He is a good fellow, and they say he is first-rate at his work, but he knows more about courts and cabinets than about farming. However, he is safe to do his duty by the place and people when I am gone, and he would help me now if I called him in, but it would cut me to the heart to do it. The girls will have their mother's money at my death—a few thousands, more or less—but I have some other property in the north which I intended for them. My father was fond of buying up odd bits of land, and one way and another got this together, when property was even lower than it is now. I had always meant to part with it if I could get a fair offer; and I had one at last. A company wanted it, partly for a line of railway, and partly for some particular stone that has been found there; and they agreed to give me my price, paying part of it down at once, and the rest within a given time, when I made over the title. I closed with them rather in a hurry, on Mabel's account—thought it would smooth matters for her and her parson, as this living is no great shakes as to income nowadays, and all seemed going on velvet till we were arranging her settlement.

"For years I kept all my papers here, and it was only after an alarm of fire, that my lawyers persuaded me they would be safer in their keeping. I was a fool for being talked over, but a plain man has no chance against his lawyer, and I supposed all was right till we began to look up the title-deeds of that property, and found one was missing. I thought old Lawson would have had a fit. They turned the whole place upside down looking for it; and there was a talk of a dismissed clerk who had carried off something of their own, and I believe they are hunting for him still, but though he has been heard of in all sorts of places, they have not caught him yet. Now the curious thing is that I was so positive of having given them the papers all right, that I never did much in looking for the lost one here, but it suddenly occurred to me that the box was opened years ago, when some leases had to be renewed, and that it was just possible, though very unlikely, that the deed, only a small one, might have fallen off the table, and got put away among the books and things. So I have made up my mind, the house being empty of guests, to have every volume in this room turned over before my own eyes to-morrow, and you may sit in this chair, if you choose, and look on. Supposing nothing to come of it, I tell you frankly, I am in a hole. There will be the purchase-money to repay the company,

besides the cost of their outlay ; and I shall be lucky if I escape an action for breach of contract. Now, my dear fellow, as a sensible man, can you wonder that I am not exactly in tune for a wedding ? ”

The vision of that precious document on its way to the Colonies, if not there already, made it difficult to give a cheering answer ; but at the moment, I was more sorry for the fine old man than for any delay his troubles might involve. All fear of offence was lost in sympathy ; and I bluntly told him that I would answer for Emily's entire agreement in my opinion—that neither of us could be happy while he was distressed—and in short, that any capital now at my disposal was at his, for as long as circumstances made it necessary.

My eyes were too dim to see the expression of his face, and I fancy he hardly saw mine ; but we understood each other from that moment, and at his own suggestion went to join his daughters in the drawing-room. Of course I was to stay to dinner, just as I was ; and meanwhile, I was to fight my battles over again, and tell them all about that story in the papers of bringing in that wounded man. (Those correspondents like to make a great story about every trifle.) I am not a good hand at story-telling myself, and was making rather a muddle of recollections, being haunted at the time by that Colonial cargo, when the door suddenly opened, and Herbert looked in, his face, as his wife said afterwards, radiant with infinite possibilities.

“ You have had one unexpected visitor already, sir,” he said, as the Squire turned to greet him, “ and I have brought you another.”

CHAPTER III.

JEM MORRIS TELLS THE REST.

FROM the first I approved of Elizabeth. I must have done so, or I could not have felt so much at home in the Vicarage kitchen, with my disappointment still fresh in my mind. Hassock here or hassock there, I saw I had not come all that way for nothing. Even if I had to go after it among the Australian niggers, I should still have had a sight of Elizabeth.

There was a neatness about her that fetched me at once. Not an inch too much or too little about herself or her clothes ; and as to her manners, they were simply perfect. The Captain was reading out the other evening some very smart verses about Tommy Atkins, and the way they snub him in peace and beg him to walk in the front when the guns begin to shoot, and so on ; and it may be all true enough, but what I want to say is, it don't hold good with Elizabeth. She knew how to treat the Service, no one better, even though it might be a tinkered-up specimen. Anyhow, she behaved to me as if I had been a sergeant-major. I don't say but what the cook was nice and pleasant too. She was a comfortable-looking

young woman, with the largest notion of what hot-buttered toast should be, if it's there at all, that I ever came across. But she was not a patch upon Elizabeth; nothing like it.

It was a curious thing, I thought afterwards, how these two young women got out of me all they wanted to know. I had no idea beforehand of mentioning our errand, but sitting there over our tea, and they asking questions all civil and pleasant, I found myself telling them the whole story just as if I had come on purpose. And I might have done a more foolish thing, as I found out afterwards.

We had heard the gardener get out the pony-carriage (I didn't think much of him), and after awhile Elizabeth said she had some jelly that her mistress wanted taken to a sick woman. Perhaps I might like to look about the village? I might meet with some old acquaintance. The new one I had already met was quite inducement enough, and I was ready. The two women said something to each other that I could not hear; then Elizabeth put on her hat, as trim as the rest of her, I collared the jelly, and off we set. That walk was a great deal too short. Elizabeth had a way of talking that made you talk your best and wonder you were so clever. To be sure, one felt like a donkey afterwards, but that was no fault of hers.

She took me to a small house, built since my time, and explained as we were going in that old Mrs. Goodbridge lived in the lower room, the house being occupied by her grandson and his family. The wife was ill, and for her the jelly was intended. Would I go and chat with the old lady while she went upstairs? I should perhaps remember her, though she could not be expected to know me again.

I did remember her, sure enough, though her back was bent and her cheeks were pinched, and her once busy hands crippled. Her eyesight and hearing were still pretty good for her age, and when she understood that I was Granny Morris's boy that ran away from the Hall, she began to call me to mind and to remark that I was grown out of all knowledge. But she was not much interested in my doings. She went on talking about herself and her husband's long illness, and how since his death she had come to live with Jack and Bella; and very cheap she held Bella's housekeeping, as far as I could make out. But I own I lost the thread of the story more than once in my eagerness to carry out an idea that had come into my head while she was talking. Seizing an opportunity when she stopped to cough, I asked if she ever covered hassocks now. I remembered as if it were yesterday seeing her busy over one in the vestry, and it was for her husband, the churchwarden. Her old eyes lighted up with pleasure. Did I remember *that*, and *him*? To be sure I did. Why, I had come on purpose to see it again, and found there none in the church.

"Oh, yes," I went on, encouraged by the look in her face, "I can see him now, resting his lame foot upon it, as I saw him in church

that Sunday. Do you know, Mrs. Goodbridge, I would give a sovereign for that hassock—that I would."

And I slapped one on the table then and there. She said nothing at first, only gasped; then she got up from her chair and hobbled to the door, looked out, and listened up the stairs, and came back to her seat.

"If that wasteful young thing heard you, I should never have a moment's peace. Let me see that sovereign."

I passed it to her, and she inspected it carefully before dropping it into her pocket.

"My husband once brought one in from the church plate, and he said it weren't worth a brass farthing. "Now, young man," in a cautious whisper, "if you'll look in that corner, and lift off the big Bible and the cloth, you'll see what you want to see."

And sure enough there was the missing hassock. I could have kissed it for joy, but I only lifted it tenderly, and brought it to her feet. It was faded and shabby enough, but still tight and whole.

"A sovereign is a good bit of money," she said, looking down at her treasure, and shaking her head, "or I'd never have parted with it; but there, when I'm dead and gone, it would only be kicked about by the children, and you seem such a steady young man; I suppose you be going to settle?" She did not wait for my answer, but went on with her flow of talk. "You see, though he didn't take to his bed till quite the last, he was ill a long time, and he would ramble in his talk; and one day our good Vicar—he was a dear old gentleman—came to read to him, and John, he thought he was in church, and the sermon beginning, and he made himself comfortable in his chair, and felt with his foot, and whispers to me, 'What's got the hassock?' Well, I hushed him up, and pushed something for his foot, and he went off to sleep more easy than I'd seen him for a week. The Vicar just took no notice, and finished his reading; and as he goes out he says to me, 'What was it he asked for?' 'If you please, sir, I says, 'it was his hassock, as he uses in church. When he heard your voice, he thought he was there.' The Vicar looked at me very grave for a minute, and then with a twinkle in his eyes—'Bless his heart,' he says, as he walks away, 'let him have his hassock if it makes him sleep better.' And I fetched it that very evening, and whenever I see him getting fidgety and tired, I'd whisper, 'Here it is, John,' and he put out his foot directly, and slept like a lamb. He always thought he was in church, bless him. But he is gone, and the Vicar too, and I'm stiff in my legs and can't use it myself; so if you'll take it as a remembrance, young man, you're kindly welcome."

She spoke as if she was making me a handsome present, instead of striking a bargain; but I was too glad to be particular, and only hoped, for her sake, that Bella would not find it out. As I went out with the cushion under my arm, Elizabeth came down the stairs. She nodded, but said nothing till we were well out of hearing, and

then I found that she had taken me there on purpose, on the chance of the hassock, which she had seen there once, turning out to be the right one. It was very clever of her, I thought, but when I said so, she seemed to think my getting it from the old woman was cleverer still. She supposed that in the army we were accustomed to get all we tried for, because we tried so hard.

"I'll remind you of that some day," was the answer; and I have done it since pretty often.

We found Mr. Wingfield only just setting out, having been detained by some old man or other, as Elizabeth said he was sure to be if he was in a hurry; and when he saw what I was carrying, he could hardly believe his own eyes. He shook my hand so heartily; I had no idea a quiet-looking parson could give it such a grip.

"No fear of its having been tampered with, Morris?" he asked, as he stood gloating over the poor battered thing as if it had been a big nugget.

"I think not, sir," I said. "I asked her if she had covered it again, and she said no. There are no holes, only fraying at the edges. Should I cut it open and see?"

"Not here," the Vicar said; "it must be done in the Squire's presence, or he will never believe our story. But as folks might stare and ask questions, we will just strap this light rug round it for you to carry, and then we shall not be accused of robbing the church."

I cannot say how kind the Vicar was in that walk. No "Tommy here, Tommy there" about *him*. He knew the way to a soldier's heart, and we were soon talking like good friends, which I am proud to think we have been ever since. When I got out something about being ashamed for all the worry I had brought on my old master, he said what struck him most was the way things had worked together for good.

"You have had the opportunity given you of undoing your boyish mischief through doing your duty as a man. Depend upon it, Morris," he said, "there is many a gallant fellow, with plumes in his hat and orders on his breast, who would give all and more besides for such a chance as yours!"

And then, all of a sudden, my courage began to melt away, for here we were at the great door, and in another minute I should have to face the Squire. I would fain have begged off at the last moment, but Mr. Wingfield only laughed, and said I deserved to be drummed out, and had to follow him, whether or no, for all the world, like a dog that is going to be whipped. But then Miss Emily came to shake hands with me, and bring me herself to her father's chair, saying kinder things than I deserved, no doubt to please the Captain; and after the first I pulled myself together, and faced the Squire, as I felt was my duty. The thing had to be done, and in our regiment we knew what that meant. So I made my story as short and plain as I could, and told him the truth—that I didn't know at

the time what I had done, but that when once I did understand, I could never forget it, least of all when I thought I was dying. I tried to add about my wanting to tell the Captain, but somehow the thought of that time and his goodness made me stammer and choke, and I had to hurry on to our arrival and the blow it was to find all the hassocks gone. And I just found that the right one had been left behind, thank God! And—and would he now forgive me?

"My good fellow," was his answer, "if my title-deed is in there, we shall have to decide whether you deserve a rope's end for putting it in, or a fifty-pound note for getting it out. Where are your scissors, Emily? We will know our fate at once."

The hassock was carefully ripped, and the lost document drawn out none the worse for being in hiding. The Squire's relief was much too great to admit of any real anger, though he declared he would give it well to old Trueman for leaving such a mischievous jackanapes alone with the papers. But worse still was my being such a consummate idiot as not to drop the thing on the table. What was I afraid of? Of his being angry? Stuff and nonsense! Did I stop to think of being shot when I stormed up that place with the name he couldn't remember?

"No, sir," I said, "but then I just followed the Captain." And from the way the ladies took that, it was pretty plain I had scored, and by-gones would be by-gones.

I have no space to tell how much was made of me in the servants' hall by old Trueman and the rest. I had a glorious evening, I know that, and I fancy the Captain's was even better than mine.

Miss Emily's unwillingness to leave her father was got over by Mr. George unexpectedly marrying abroad, and coming home to live with his bride at the Hall. Captain and Mrs. Acton rented a house in the village, and I stayed with them till the Squire offered me a vacant lodge, where Elizabeth and I have now our home. Mrs. Wingfield says she shall never forgive me, but she is our frequent visitor all the same.

As for what the Squire calls "the receiver of stolen goods," my wife covered it again so neatly, it looks as well as ever. She does not care to have it much used, and it has the place of honour in our parlour; but I always find it ready for me to kneel on at family prayers. She says it is a witness to us both of God's loving mercy; and that seems to me no bad end for the Churchwarden's Hassock!



BARTOLOZZI.

AT the present day there is no name better known in the art world than the subject of this sketch, who, nevertheless, died nearly ninety years ago, in great distress and poverty.

Bartolozzi was born in Florence, early developed artistic talent and became the pupil of the engraver Wagner, who taught him, and for whom he was working in Venice, when an Englishman named Dalton, also an engraver, being struck with the youth's great and original talent, offered him £300 a year if he would come to London and work exclusively for him. In those days £300 a year was a large income. The agreement was made; and some of Bartolozzi's best work is signed by the name of his two masters.

Things worked well for a time, but later on there seems to have come a rift within the lute. Discord and disagreement followed, and the young foreigner fell upon somewhat troublous days in the land of his adoption.

Another stranger, the great Dublin banker, David La Touche, showed him much kindness at this period, and, to show his gratitude, our hero executed a number of exquisite mezzotints for him and his brothers. Some of them still hang on the walls of the La Touches' lovely place, Belview, in the County Wicklow, which was thus described in 1833 by a Russian prince who was making the grand tour: "Imagine," he says, "a summer house, which seems to hang in the air. It overlooks the glen of the Downs, a deep valley, behind which two extinct volcanoes lift their conical heads. This arbour of beauty is all aglow now, with purple heather, but a less happy thought is a stuffed tiger lying as if alive in the ante-room."

Bartolozzi was not a handsome man, and the stiff stock and unpicturesque attire of his day does not improve his appearance in his portraits, but there is great power in his harsh large features. He was, in his turn, kind and generous to brother artists; for when the painter and engraver, Ryland, was executed in 1783 for forgery, it was Bartolozzi who took in hand and completed a large plate engraving the unfortunate criminal had in hand while in prison for the benefit of his beloved belongings, for whose sake he had been rash enough to commit his crime. It was Ryland who first introduced the art of stipple engraving in the chalk manner, although Bartolozzi is generally credited with its invention.

The latter was made for a time Court engraver, and on the foundation, in 1768, of the Royal Academy was so well known and in such repute that he was made a member of that august body, of which the great Sir Joshua was appointed President at the age of

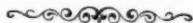
forty-five, which position he retained for twenty-one years, until the year 1790, when on one unhappy day, feeling a slight blurring of the sight in his left eye, he laid down his brush for ever at sixty-six ; and, like most enthusiasts for art or business, pined and died of his inaction two years later.

Bartolozzi engraved many of the President's works ; amongst the rest his "Age of Innocence," of which the tale goes that, being asked to paint a companion picture, Sir Joshua, casting about for a model of the "Age of Vice," found it in a prison, and having set his model talking, discovered in him the old-time subject of his earlier sketch—a coincidence no more strange, however, than many others well authenticated.

All through the zenith of his fame Bartolozzi made his home at West Brompton, near that city, as it now is, of the London dead. He was an untiring workman, always busied with his tools, always looking out for fitting subjects to popularize. He engraved Benwell's beauties of St. James's and St. Giles's, the latter bolder and more striking type being taken from one of the five beautiful Miss Boroughs ; the model for the more delicate and refined figure being the eldest daughter of the celebrated Irish beauty Elizabeth Gunning, for whom a Dublin fortune-teller truthfully foretold that she should become a double duchess ; and who was in reality in her prime, as Doctor Johnson called her, a duchess with three tails, having been created Baroness Hambledon in her own right. Her daughter, Lady Augusta Hamilton, the St. James's beauty, eloped from a ball in a fit of pique, "just like any common housemaid," as Miss Burney remarks. The duchess, once Elizabeth Gunning, sat up all night, hourly expecting the truant, and at last going in search of her in the grey dawn, learned the truth. The marriage was not a happy one.

Bartolozzi's fame, as years went by, spread far and wide. You can see some of his early work treasured in foreign galleries, great and small, even in the village museum of Colla up in the Italian border mountains. The King of Portugal was inflamed with a desire to attract to his capital so great an artist with the chisel. When the last century had as nearly run out as this now has, he persuaded the old man, then perhaps failing in judgment, to leave London and sail for Lisbon. The promises of rewards offered were liberal but were not fulfilled, and Bartolozzi died poor and unhappy some years later on. After his death there was an auction of some two thousand of his subjects, which sold well.

ALICE QUARRY.



THE QUICK AND THE DEAD.

WITHIN Death's chamber, robed in stainless white,
 I lay as one entranced with wondrous dreams
 Of dales all radiant in celestial light,
 Of music-haunted groves and singing streams.
 Soft through the casement poured the chastened beams
 Of the descending moon, low in the west ;
 The firelight rose and fell in fitful gleams ;
 My hands were folded on my cold, still breast,
 And on my lips there lay the smile of final rest.

The moon sank o'er the pines, and from the tower
 Of the old church, with rhythmic strokes of fate,
 The clock told loud the mystic midnight hour.
 The nightingale, that to his amorous mate
 Had all night sung his love, now seemed to wait
 In silence for some nameless thing of dread.
 Sudden there came a thundering at the gate,
 And past the listening elms a rider sped ;
 Then came soft footfalls round my flower-strewn bed.

Slow, one by one, they went, and he alone
 Was left beside me in my silent sleep ;
 Then down upon the floor, with bitter moan,
 He knelt in agony of dark remorse, which deep
 Into his soul like sickle sank, to reap
 The ill-starred harvest of a heedless spring ;
 For I in love had given, for him to keep,
 A woman's heart—the peerless, priceless thing
 Which loving woman unto loyal man can bring.

Long, long he knelt, low murmuring my name,
 Nor dared to kiss the shroud upon my breast,
 But seemed as one who, supplicating, came
 To seek as priceless boon a last behest
 From one within the fair land of the blest.
 Then o'er the night a deep soft silence fell,
 Which spake of peace, and pardon, and sweet rest ;
 Whilst the fair flowers around, by some strange spell,
 Shed incense sweet, as from rich groves of asphodel.

At last with trembling hand he raised the fold
 Of the white shroud which hid my azure eyes,
 And the calm face which, wreathed with locks of gold,
 Seemed sweetly gazing, as with glad surprise,
 On angels hovering from the shining skies.
 Then, stooping down, he kissed my pale, cold face,
 Which he once deemed as conquering love's sweet prize ;
 Surely he knew that then Heaven's healing grace
 Had sealed our love anew in that thrice-holy place !

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

"RESPECTFULLY, JONES."

BY CONSTANCE COTTERELL.

I.

ROGER HASTINGS stood on the landing and peered in at the brilliance of the door opening, over dazzling shoulders and between perfectly-dressed heads. He knew he should get into the drawing-room in time—and probably immediately wish himself outside again—and he waited, quite patiently dodging the various moving heads in front of him, though it was clear there was something in the room before him that he had a particular desire to see. But these heads invariably moved into the line of his vision as soon as he had a clear avenue through them to the drawing-room. This was annoying. Still, he approached, and, in having fewer heads to dodge, gained that way. Suddenly his face lightened, and his eyes narrowed an instant and then opened a shade wider than usual. They shone too, but this was all the outward sign of his pleasure. At the same moment a rosy blush appeared on the face of a young girl standing behind another and far more gloriously-apparelled young girl, who in her turn stood immediately behind the radiant hostess just inside the doorway.

By the time Roger Hastings took the hand of the radiant hostess the blush had quite died away, and the girl looked at him calmly for one mere instant as he greeted her. She was in shimmering white, and her hair was rare pale gold, but no man had yet been bold enough to declare the colour of her eyes. The hostess, following her handsome guest with her glance, saw them as they shook hands, and she thought they made a charming pair. Then she frowned. The thought was involuntary; the frown was not. She looked sharply at her own daughter Lois, whom he had very quickly passed, and then turned again to the oncoming guests with a smile of abounding welcome. The young man lingered a moment with the golden-haired girl and then wandered on into the room.

Now it so happened that Roger Hastings was almost as rich in the things of this world as in the gifts and graces of the spiritual and intellectual worlds, and so he was made much of by radiant hostesses and mothers generally—on account of the latter qualifications, they said. These manifestations he was well used to, but it seemed to him to-night that the usual amenities were more marked than usual, even pronounced. He had a feeling over and over again that he was being hemmed in by agreeable mothers—a baffled feeling as though he could see what he desired but not attain to it for a crowd

of agreeable daughters. As time went on it struck him that that was exactly what *was* happening to him. For instance, after first speaking to everybody whom he knew would expect or exact it of him, he was just making his way towards the distant gleam of Sal's golden hair when Mrs. Wilson, his hostess, came up, protesting she had looked for him everywhere, positively everywhere, to introduce him to Miss Canapie. He yielded himself perforce, and she led him over. Miss Canapie was a drab, shiny-skinned young lady in a pink gown, not of the kind either to capture the eye at first or to enslave the heart at last. Talking to her was Lois Wilson, the gloriously-apparelled damsel who had stood before her cousin, Sal Doren, at the door. And by-and-by—he did not know how it happened—Miss Canapie had subsided into a seat, and he and Lois were standing talking in front of her, completely blocking her out from all hope of rescue by friends.

This was not the situation he had hoped for himself. The day was ages ago when he had for one foolish moment thought he was about to love Lois Wilson. Long ago it was before her cousin Sal came up to town—in fact, the date that he had already made his starting-point to count backwards or forwards from. That foolish moment he had so absolutely forgotten that he would have denied it if anyone had charged him with it. But that arrival of Sal's was Lois's counting-point too, only she felt very differently about it. His happy days came after it, hers before it—her days, at least, of delightful contemplation of his income, his social prestige, his connections, with an equally delightful idea that some day they might be hers. And she could not yet believe that the prospect of all these was actually closed to her—to *her*, Lois Wilson. So she smiled and prattled, lifting her eyes to his and hoping that several special persons among her acquaintance saw how long they talked together.

Roger talked to her with the courtesy he always showed, but nevertheless he watched keenly for an opportunity to fly, and he was just about to release himself when the white and gold he kept his eyes on disappeared under the wing of an elderly, yellow-faced Indian personage. Upon this he suddenly resigned himself and turned his face fully upon Lois, conscious that hitherto she had only had half; and Lois, catching her mother's glance upon her, lowered her pretty eyelids with demure conviction of being approved. By-and-by Sal and the livery Indian reappeared.

"Your cousin has a heavy charge," Roger said, really not knowing that he broke into the middle of a sentence of Lois's.

"Sal?" said she, and he half thought she was annoyed at his speaking of her. "Oh, Sal adores queer beings! You see, she knows literally nobody down in her village. The nastiest person is a treat to her."

"She has had several treats to-night," he said rather grimly.

Lois answered nothing, and he left her before she was quite aware of it.

This time the white and gold glimmered from behind a bank of big dowagers. He was very near it when the biggest of the dowagers put her shut fan across his path.

"Mr. Hastings," she intoned, "Mrs. Wilson tells me you are going abroad soon. Is that true? What have we done that you should leave us?"

"Surely it is I who am banished!" said Roger, with his eyes on the unattainable Sal.

The episode lengthened itself into five minutes. When he turned again to go to where Sal had stood, there stood Lois Forden. He wheeled abruptly round again. Once more he tried. Once more he was baffled. The idea vaguely came to him that the whole evening might very well pass in this manner and he not have speech with her. His mouth closed determinedly at the thought; he tried to plan how he could arrange things. Supper? He *would* take her down to supper. Surely no one could prevent his taking her. Meantime he was aware always in what corner the distant—always very distant—golden gleam was shining. And when at last the supper-stir made itself felt through the rooms, he set his face and his feet fixedly in that direction. He had got within a few feet of her, her eyes met his and smiled at him. Already he felt the first warm thrill of satisfied wishes, when Mrs. Wilson and Lois appeared by the merest chance to block his path. He was passing on, but—

"You were like the answer to an enigma, Mr. Hastings," said Mrs. Wilson, more radiant than ever. "I was at that moment wondering to whom I should entrust Lois."

"Pardon me," he said quite patiently. "It would have given me great pleasure, but I—Miss Doren——"

"Sal?" said Mrs. Wilson, in just the same tone that Lois had used. "Sal?" Then she smiled sweetly upon him. "You shall take Sal afterwards. But in the meantime Lois is consumed with hunger."

It seemed to him once more that he was always looking for Sal, almost reaching her, almost having hold of her, and then—finding Lois. He gave his arm to her perfunctorily, and looked at Sal over Mrs. Wilson's interposing head. The light died out of her eyes and the last of the warm thrill vanished from his own heart. Never mind, he said to himself, he was to take Sal down later. Mrs. Wilson herself had said so. And, once he had got her, who could say when he would let her go again? Never, if the power to hold her were his.

He did not exactly hurry the hungry Lois over her oyster *pâté*, chicken and champagne, but nevertheless there was that in his air that let her know she might not delay. Two glasses of champagne she required, he found, and there was a very favourite and inaccessible sweet of hers that she was willing to wait hours for. But at last she could stay no longer, and in decency eat no more. Quickly her

hand was in his arm again, and through the apparently impenetrable crowd in the supper-rooms she found herself passing as if by magic. Roger Hastings was undeniably a big man. Moreover he had made up his mind. And this time he thought he was sure of his desire.

On the staircase they met Sal descending to supper on the arm of the livery Indian. At the top, looking down upon them, was Mrs. Wilson. Roger caught the small involuntary smile of triumph flickering on her mouth before it had time to disappear. His own mouth tightened. He knew now. He continued to come very near to Sal as they met.

"I must speak to you," he said low.

"If I can," she answered, not very logically.

Her eyes, as he looked into them that brief instant were half brave, half frightened, and he could not tell if there was that in them that he longed to see. The sudden involuntary pressure he gave Lois Wilson's arm must be credited to Sal. He looked up again at Mrs. Wilson. She smiled on.

He supposed the party went on after that. He knew there were noisy times and quiet times. The quiet times were when somebody played or sang. But he was conscious of practically nothing till Sal and her Indian came up again. And then he was only conscious of her and himself—with intervening matter. Loads of intervening matter—mostly human.

At last he saw her disappear on to the balcony with two girls, one of them the drab-pink Miss Canapie. He looked quickly round. Mrs. Wilson was not in that particular room. Next instant, all intervening matter notwithstanding, he was on that balcony.

"May I speak to you here, Miss Doren?" he said simply, and with such evident intention that the young girls melted before his breath like coloured snow.

"Yes," she said, simply too, and held the railing hard with the beautifully-cleaned gloves of Lois's that Mrs. Wilson had given her that morning. But before she had finished even that the girls had gone.

Roger Hastings filled his lungs with the cool air and let it go again.

"It's been like a nightmare," he said, turning his head and looking down on her.

"What?" said Sal innocently.

"Being within reach of what one wanted and never getting it the whole evening. I began to think I should wake up before I got it."

"Oh, do wake up!" said Sal. "I don't like people who walk in their sleep."

"I am awake."

"And you've lost what you wanted?"

"No, I've found it."

Sal was silent. He came quite near.

"Do you know I sail for Canada to-morrow?"

"I—I heard them saying it," faltered Sal.

"It is very sudden. I had no idea it would be yet. They must be in a hole, or I should have had longer notice."

"In a hole?" said Sal, without, however, the least notion of what she did say.

He appeared to have no idea of it either, for he stood silent and then said:

"My preparations give me very short time to——" He hesitated.

"To break old ties?" suggested Sal faintly, as he still stood without speaking.

"To form new ones," he said in a sudden way, and stopped.

It was what he had so often dreamed of—to have Sal standing like this close to him, with nobody to interfere, looking up at him with those clear but unfathomable eyes—that even for the joy of what he hoped would follow he could not disturb the breathless pleasure of that moment. It was so good to feel that that golden head might lie upon his breast, if only—if *only* what he hoped was true—that just for that very reason he could not say the word that would betray the situation to itself.

"Do you like forming new ties?" he asked.

"I have so seldom tried," said Sal. "I have never had any opportunity till I came here."

"And have you formed no new ties here?"

"I—don't know," said she very bravely, lifting her eyes to his face.

Then, if ever, was his moment. He took it—and her hand.

Just inside the window they heard the voice of Lois Wilson.

"Have you seen my cousin?" it asked.

A traitor—so Roger thought—hastened to reply:

"I think I saw her go out through the window a minute ago."

Lois's head appeared at the open window. For a moment she was too much dazzled by the light she had left to see them in the darkness. Of that moment he made the most.

"I *must* see you to-morrow," he whispered, and the pressure of his hand hurt her all night afterwards. "I will come at eleven, and—and if you are out I shall understand. I could not take a refusal from you face to face. But, dearest, be at home."

How it happened that Lois did not hear I cannot conceive. Perhaps she did. She was by this time on the balcony, quite near, even touching Sal's sacred arm with her fan, Roger saw.

"Sal," she said, "mother wants you to go and speak to Lady Dacre. She has a message for you."

The ringing in her ears of that low-spoken "I will come at eleven" made it quite easy for Sal to go. She went with uplifted head and shining eyes.

But if Lois had any idea that she would thereupon supply Sal's place on the balcony she was wrong. Mr. Hastings politely but

unmistakably made it clear that he must say good-bye and go home to pack books.

"How I envy you going to Canada," Lois whispered flutteringly; "and *attachés* always have such a good time."

But he was standing by the window-frame waiting to follow her indoors, and she went.

II.

IN a throng at last the people took their leave, and the bereaved household thoughtfully blew out dangerous candles. Sal saved one or two burning shades. All her faculties seemed to be quickened. She felt that she could have heard and seen and done things impossible to her before. Her uncle, Mr. Wilson, remarked to his wife, no longer the radiant hostess, how uncommonly well Sal looked to-night. Mrs. Wilson made no reply. But he continued to follow her about with his eyes, and marvelled at the sudden glory that had come upon the girl. She seemed even taller. She carried her head high, and her eyes shone, and there was a measured grace in her movements that was almost new to her, as though her life had suddenly been set to music.

When she had said good-night to them all, she went upstairs and sat down in her own room—sat quite still for an hour, her head on one hand, gazing at where the fire would have been if it had been Lois's room. But she did not think whether there were a fire or not. That kind of thing mattered very little to her, and just now—to-night—not at all.

At eleven. "I will come at eleven." That lasted her a good half-hour. Then, "If you are out I shall understand." Understand what? That she did not love him, she supposed. Blind man! "But, dearest, be at home!" That "dearest" lasted longest of all. Of course she would be at home! And then, just by her *being* at home when he came, he would know without a word, as soon as ever he saw her, that she loved him. At that she buried her face in her hands. And so another hour passed.

In the morning she woke up in bed, so she supposed she must have undressed and got in. The rain was slapping itself against the window, but it seemed a very bright and agreeable day to her. She slept in a top room with a dormer window, and all the view she could get by standing on the ends of her toes was as far down as the drawing-room windows of the opposite houses. Sometimes she thought it dull. This morning it appeared to her the pleasantest prospect in the world, unless there were a better in Canada. As this thought ran unbidden through her mind, she was looking without seeing at her own image in the glass. But she did distinctly see a bright red flush which seemed to spread over the whole glass, and even to hang over the edges, she said to herself, smiling.

Then she mused for a long time, obliging herself to dress in a very short one, just in time to run downstairs and pour out the children's tea. Mrs. Wilson always liked her to pour out the children's tea, and do a good deal for the children, in fact. She had invited her up from her little poverty-stricken home to come to town and see some gaiety. She had given her two or three charming gowns, and taken her to several parties; but quite half of Sal's gaiety had taken place in the nursery. And there she was, the gayest of the gay.

This morning she poured out the children's tea, and looked after all their wants with the kindest hands and eyes even they had ever seen in her. Again Mr. Wilson admired her gracious ways and her sudden flowering into beauty. He was the only other at breakfast. Mrs. Wilson and Lois stayed upstairs. After breakfast Sal attended to the flowers, and then went to say good-morning to her aunt.

Mrs. Wilson received her most graciously, allowed herself to be kissed, a thing she did not always permit, and told Sal she had looked positively charming the night before.

Sal looked at her and waited. It was borne in upon her there was more to come. Mrs. Wilson talked prettily for some little time longer about the music and dresses, and then, with an appearance of sudden recollection, she laid her hand on the little table by her bedside where her papers lay.

"Oh, Sal, my dear, how very stupid I am! I quite forgot yesterday—with those people coming and all the lights to arrange, I suppose—to send my weekly order to Harrods'. Now, my dear, I often wonder what I should do without you!"

"I'd go with pleasure, auntie," said Sal, glad to have nothing worse to listen to.

"And two things I positively must have by dinner-time to-night," Mrs. Wilson said, almost musingly.

"I'll go at once!" cried Sal, and rose from her chair.

"The order isn't ready, dear child," said Mrs. Wilson, tearing up the piece of paper she held as she spoke. Sal watched her hands with a fascinated gaze. "If you are there by eleven it will do."

Eleven!

"Oh, not then, auntie!" Sal stepped forward, clasping her hands and eyeing her aunt with eager eyes.

"Why not then?" retorted Mrs. Wilson with such coldness in her tone and air that Sal's only half-formed idea of telling her of her great joy died on the instant. "Why not then!" her aunt repeated, still more freezingly.

"Oh, not then!" Sal could only repeat. "Any time but then."

"That is unfortunately the only time that suits me," remarked Mrs. Wilson. "I will send you the list by Emma."

Then she turned over and closed her eyes, very definitely intimating that the affair was closed also.

Sal stood by the bed.

"Oh, auntie, auntie—do think of it again! I will do anything to oblige you."

"Do that," Mrs. Wilson rejoined very epigrammatically.

Sal only said "Oh!" again, but in such a way that it ought to have been enough for anybody.

"If you can give me any good reason why you do not wish to go," suggested Mrs. Wilson.

But Sal could not. To tell her beautiful, warm, palpitating secret to that cold woman lying there so flauntingly, back to her, was impossible. She could sooner die.

"Then you have no reason? It's only a whim?" said Mrs. Wilson, turning up a cold eye—one of those two which had beamed so warmly on her guests the night before.

Sal opened her mouth. She met the cold eye for a moment unflinchingly. Then she shut her mouth again, she had got an idea. She would write. The butler would give him the note, and—and all would be well.

"I will go, auntie," she said.

Mrs. Wilson turned right round so as to present two eyes—very much astonished and curious. Sal's face told nothing.

"I regret that you did not see your way to saying that at first, and so save yourself and me this very unbecoming scene," her aunt remarked, and turned over again.

Sal left the room.

She shut the door quite quietly. She even stood a moment outside. Then she dashed upstairs into her own room and flung open her desk. After such haste it was a little odd that she should sit with her pen in her hand, the tip of it pressed against her lips, for at least ten minutes. Then she wrote—

"I am out—but indeed, not of my own free will. Can you not come again?"

"Sal."

She quickly folded this up and addressed the envelope to Roger Hastings. Flying downstairs, she gave it into the hands of Jones, the butler, to give to Mr. Hastings if he should call. Jones, who had happened to be passing through the hall during the staircase episode the night before, and who, moreover, had his own view of matters, smiled upon her with extreme benignity and caused her desperately to blush as he assured her her will should be done. Sal's average for blushing had risen high during the last twenty-four hours.

Then, with a light heart, at a quarter to eleven she started off to Harrods' with a paper of errands which struck her as being even singularly meagre.

III.

At that very time, Roger Hastings was also starting off. Just before eleven his cab drew up at the Wilsons' house. Mr. Wilson was in the act of coming out to spend his few daily hours in reading the papers for the benefit of his country in one of the civil offices.

"Making a last call, Hastings?" he said cheerfully. "Very sorry to lose you. Well, you'll find them all in."

"All?" said Roger.

"Yes, all. No, Sal's out, by-the-bye. Gone shopping. But the wife and daughter are in. Good-bye."

He was almost at the corner of the street.

Shopping! Roger stood and watched him, and his own tall cabby in the near distance jerked up his whip invitingly. Roger shook his head, turned, lifted his hand to the knocker, and—let it fall again. Shopping!

And he had so distinctly said that if she were out he would understand. He had really told her how to refuse him, himself. And she *had* refused him. He drew a long breath. He looked up again at the knocker and lifted his hand to it. It grinned hideously upon him. His hand fell again to his side. He turned sharply round. Shopping!

The cabby still sat expectant. Hastings hailed him and drove home, thinking, thinking miserably. She had not said one word to encourage him. He even began to think it must have been his fancy that he had been prevented from speaking to her the night before. She must have wished herself to avoid him.

And Sal was taking out her little silver watch at Harrods' and thinking with a soft smile that went to the hearts of all the adjacent shopmen, "Now he's reading it!"

So she came joyously home to all sorts of pretty tunes which the omnibus wheels were obliging enough to jolt for her. Arrived there, the first thing she saw was the solemn face of Jones the butler in the hall.

"Mr. Hastings haven't been, m'm," said he.

"Not been?" faltered Sal. "Are you sure?" Then she suddenly drew herself up very straight indeed.

"Quite, m'm."

Sal glanced at the clock. It was nearly twelve. No chance of his coming now.

"It's quite unimportant, Jones," she said in a clear voice. "Give the note back to me."

She tore it up in pieces as she stood there. Then she walked upstairs in a very slow and stately manner, and burst into floods of tears in her room.

When the gong rang for lunch she thought of sending down to say she could not come. But she was too proud to let them dream she was unhappy. So she marched down and defied them all to notice her red eyes. As a matter of fact, no one did notice them except Mr. Wilson, who lunched at home on Saturdays, and who looked quickly up at her as she came in for the beauty she had shown at breakfast.

"Seedy, Sal?" he asked kindly.

"Not in the least, thank you, Uncle John," Sal returned in a terribly cheerful tone. Jones was looking at her as he poured out Lois's claret.

There was a long silence. Her uncle's next conversational spurt consisted of—"So Hastings couldn't quite tear himself away?" Nobody spoke, except Mrs. Wilson, who asked him if he liked the new cook's method of doing potatoes.

"Well, Lois, what had he to say for himself?" Mr. Wilson continued. He had not lived twenty years with Mrs. Wilson without forming views of his own as to her tactics.

"What do you mean, father?"

"You know he called here this morning," Mr. Wilson answered rather irritably. "Why do you all pretend?"

"No, father, he didn't," said Lois, looking up at him in genuine surprise.

Sal did not look at anybody. It was as much as she could do to keep her plate from spinning off the table, it was spinning so fast.

"Lois, you're only annoying your father," said Mrs. Wilson. "Let him finish his lunch."

"Lois has a natural thirst for knowledge, which I am always glad to supply," he returned perversely. "I saw him on the very doorstep."

"And what did he say?"

"Asked if you were all in."

"And you told him we were?"

"Lois, you're quite rude," interposed Mrs. Wilson.

"Yes, I said you were," he said quite crossly—"except Sal."

"And what has Sal to do with it?" demanded Mrs. Wilson.

"Did you tell him the children were out for a walk?"

But her voice was drowned by the loud clatter of Sal's knife and fork dropping on to her plate, though Sal herself hardly heard the noise, because her tumultuous little heart was making so very much more. She had enough pluck to take them up again and choke down as much lunch as she thought the others would think she ought to eat. He had been here! He had been here! That was all at first, and it was pure joy. Then—horrible, horrible thought—he was off to Liverpool that very afternoon, and then—then he would be thousands of miles away in Canada. It was only just as lunch was over that she realized this, or she did not know what she would have done.

Upstairs she sat in a blank stupor. It seemed so utterly hopeless. Of course he would be too proud to attempt anything more. She remembered so well the ring in his voice as he said, "If you are out I shall understand. I could not take a refusal face to face!"

He had implored her to be in—and she was out. Even now he must be trying to cast away every little thought of her. To Sal it seemed hopeless—final. Nothing could be done that she could see.

She sprang to her feet and walked up and down—up and down her little room, thinking. Why should their two lives be spoiled? Why should these little miserable accidental things come between them when they loved each other? As she walked her eyes fell on the fat loud-voiced American clock on her mantelpiece. She knew the time his train left Euston. And then there came an irresistible impulse to drive there and see him. There was just time. The thought took complete possession of her. She was in its grasp, and it hurried her into her walking things and even caused her quite collectedly to count the few shillings in her purse:

Then, still exalted, and with no fear of whom she might meet on the staircase—and the staircase in the region of Mrs. Wilson's rooms undeniably had its dangers—she ran quickly down and let herself out at the door. Almost without knowing how she got there, she found herself in the street, and looking about her for a cab as she put her gloves on. Two cabmen answered her glance. She made her choice, and drove off to the tune of the other's annoyance.

The glass in the corner of the cab showed her burning cheeks and shining eyes. Anxiously she leaned out and scanned every clock on church or in shop that she passed. They told her various tales, and some of them frightened her horribly.

"Make haste!" she called up to the cabman.

Then a sudden depression and timidity overcame her. She poked open the trap-door again.

"It—it doesn't matter!" she stammered.

"H'm!" said the cabby to himself. It happened to be the very man who had observed Hastings's vacillations in the morning.

The clock at Euston stood at one minute to the train-time. How she found out the platform and flew to it, she never knew, but arrive she did. It was full of people. She struggled and edged her way as only desperate persons can, but slowly, slowly the train began to move. Many heads were thrust from the moving windows, and one, far away, looked like his. She waved her whole soul frantically out to him, but he did not even see her. And then, while she still struggled and strove, waving, with the hot tears in her eyes, the train was gone from her, and its tail disappeared in a thick mist that seemed suddenly to have arisen.

She stood stock still; her arms fell to her sides, and seemed glued there. Then by slow degrees she became conscious that the faces of the crowd were all turned her way. The friends of the travellers had

ceased from watching them, and were beginning to go home. The friends of the travellers! Of course everyone had friends to see him off. He would, too—lots of them, such a popular man. She remembered the smart women, his sisters, and that mountain of breeding emphasised, his mother. They, too, would be there, and must be coming her way. And how would she explain her being there to them? If she had arrived breathless among them all at his carriage-door, how could she have explained it then? Incontinently she turned and fled.

It was a pale and drooping Sal that set out homewards. In a sober omnibus this time, and it was an omnibus that played no tunes—unless a dead march.

In time she reached home. Home! Despairingly she thought of that small, poverty-stricken little house down in the country. Would she were there instead of here with her cold aunt and Lois, all fashion and frivolity! However, here she was and must abide; and, the door being open, she slunk in and slunk upstairs, seen by nobody but Jones, who peered at her drooping face with quite a gratified expression, which was odd, seeing that all the servants liked Sal.

Two cold and lonely hours she spent in that little sloping-ceiled room of hers—hours that she never forgot as long as she lived. She had her trouble in after years, of course, but then there was always one bright thing in her life, and now there was nothing.

She did not hear a cab furiously driven up to the door, nor the knocker as furiously handled. The first thing she heard was Jones's own suave cough and well-bred tap at her own door.

"You're wanted in the drawing-room, m'm," he said, after apparently a moment's thought as to what he should say.

"Tell Mrs. Wilson I am—am very tired," she answered, without turning round, "and ask her kindly to excuse me."

"It isn't Mrs. Wilson, ma'am," said Jones, and went away.

Something in the man's tone made Sal's dead heart suddenly beat once more. She hastily turned towards him the face she had been so careful to conceal, but he was gone.

But by the time she had arranged her hair and bathed her face and got down to the drawing-room door, that brave little heart seemed to have stopped again. What hope could there be? she asked herself. None. He was half-way to Liverpool. She opened the door.

Inside stood Roger Hastings, an open telegram in his hand. She stood still one blinded instant, and then went swiftly towards him as he to her. He held out the telegram to her.

"Oh, Sal, Sal," he cried, "is it true? I found this at home when I rushed back from the club, to say I was not to go to Canada after all, as they have given me something better at home." It all came in a breath, while she stood breathless. "Sal, speak to me! Is it true?" And again he thrust the telegram under her eyes.

Sal read, for all her daze—

"Miss Doren away from home unwilling. Respectfully, JONES."

"Yes," she whispered, "it's true!"

But he only caught a faint echo of this reply, though he bent his head to hear, for a man's coat is a thick and choking thing, and only a poor conductor of sound.

SONNET.

A NEW YEAR'S GREETING.

THE muffled murmur of melodious bells
Steals o'er the stillness of the winter night—
A fitting cadence to the tender light
With which the moon sheds forth her soothing spells
O'er all the scene—a tender light which tells
Of friends beloved, passed from our mortal sight,
And memories sweet, o'er which a halo bright
From out the past with loving reverence dwells.
But hark! a pause, and lo! upon the air
There smites the joyful sound of merry peals.
The heart leaps up and breathes a hopeful prayer
For this New Year, which "trips the Old Year's heels."
Be these glad sounds for us a presage fair
Of deeper joys which hallowed grief reveals.

E. M. ALFORD.

